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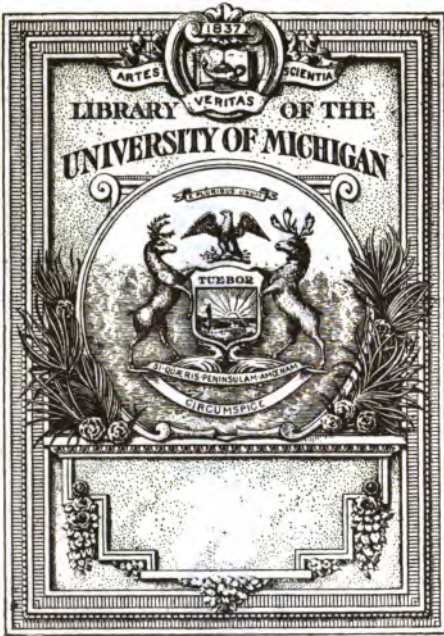
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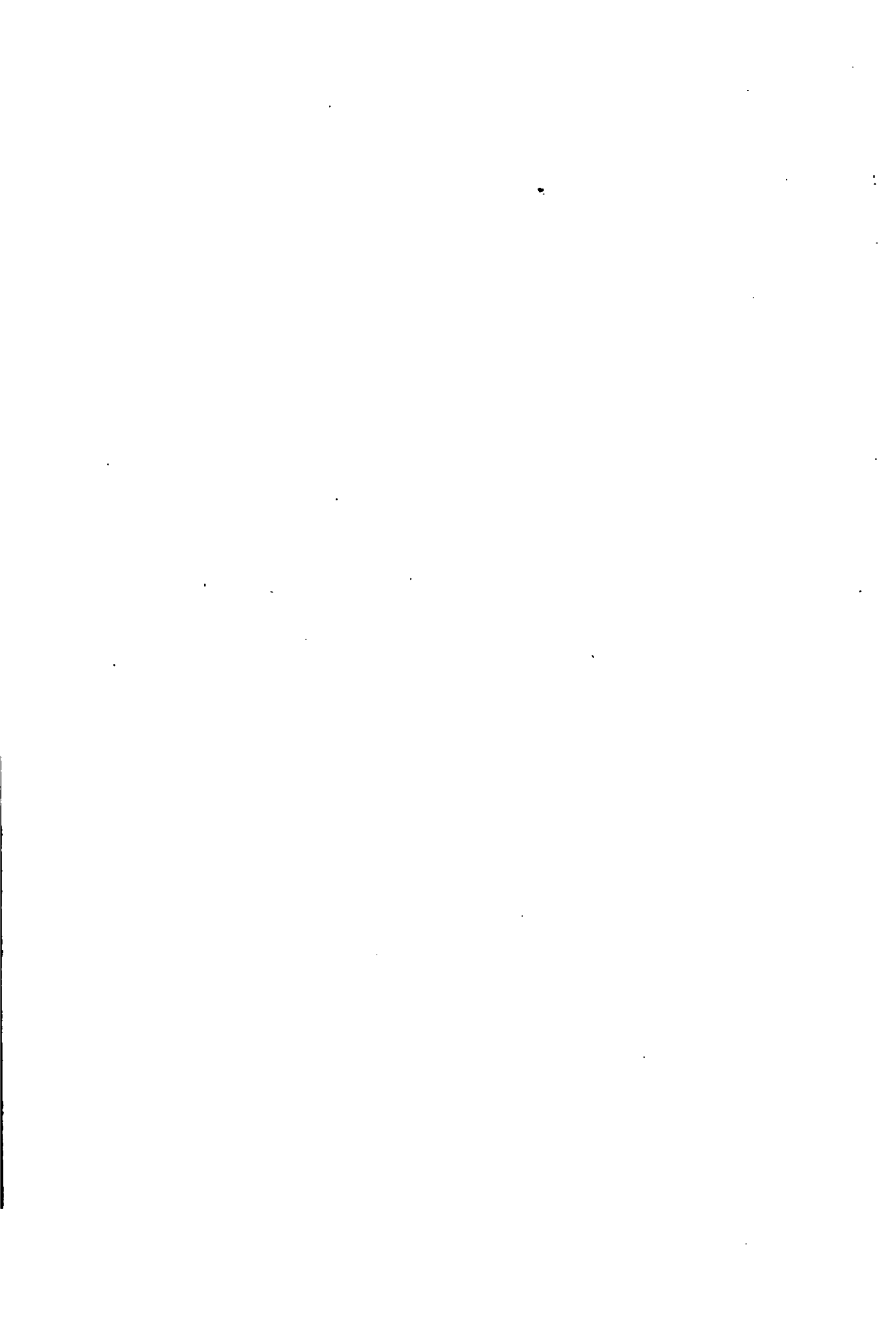


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MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

**THE SHADOW OF LOVE**

MRS. S. S. WOOD'S  
MADELEINE AT  
HER MIRROR

A Woman's Diary

By MARCELLE TINAYRE

Authorised Translation  
BY WINIFRED STEPHENS.



LONDON: JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD  
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To  
MADAME BABICK

To you, my dear Aunt, I dedicate this book. It is not a novel, but a collection of impressions, of dreams and of memories, in which fiction mingles with fact. It is a mirror in the hands of a woman, who, on its tiny surface, loves to observe the reflection of her own thoughtful face, of her own alert mind, the lights and shadows of feeling and the fleeting pictures of life.

MARCELLE TINAYRE.

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## CONTENTS

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR -	I
II. A GARDEN AND A LESSON -	8
III. MOTHER AND SON -	15
IV. THE SOLITARY -	23
V. BY THE SEA -	29
VI. MODE AND MATERNITY -	37
VII. PARIS IN AUTUMN -	44
VIII. A FRENCH PEASANTESS -	52
IX. OTHERS' HAPPINESS -	59
X. DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE -	66
XI. FLAT-HUNTING -	71
XII. MADEMOISELLE SNOBINETTE AT THE AUTUMN SALON -	78
XIII. THE ANTIQUE -	85
XIV. WOMEN AT SALES -	92
XV. BEAUTY SECRETS -	100
XVI. FRIENDSHIP AMONG WOMEN -	107
XVII. ANGELS' GIFTS -	115
XVIII. WHO BREAKS, PAYS -	123
XIX. THE PAST -	132
XX. IN JUSTICE TO MEN -	141
XXI. WOMEN AND THEIR DRESSMAKERS -	149
XXII. FRIENDSHIP AND JEAN GILBERT -	158
XXIII. THE JOYS OF TRAVEL -	165
XXIV. TASTE AND COLOUR -	173
XXV. PIN MONEY -	181

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXVI. A WIFE'S GRIEVANCE - - -	189
XXVII. WOMEN AND LITERATURE - - -	197
XXVIII. CONVALESCENCE - - -	205
XXIX. A LOST SPRING - - -	213
XXX. A DECLARATION - - -	220
XXXI. IN MEMORY OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU	228
XXXII. MY OLD HOME, FAREWELL - - -	234
XXXIII. A COMPLAINT OF THE RAIN - - -	241
XXXIV. LOVE AND COLETTE - - -	247
XXXV. A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY - - -	257
XXXVI. HESITATION - - -	265
XXXVII. MY CHILDREN - - -	273
XXXVIII. ON AN AIR BY SCHUMANN - - -	282

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# Madeleine at her Mirror

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## CHAPTER I

### MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

**I** OPEN my eyes. . . . It is my own room in my country house, yellow with yellow hangings and yellow with sunlight. It is softly bathed in liquid, transparent gold. Not only do I breathe the scent of new-mown grass, but the chintz, the clean linen, and the very furniture seem to emit a fragrance of their own. My glance, grown unaccustomed to these things, now, as on every returning summer, meets with that pleasant, brief surprise which recalls the dazzling mornings of childhood. When I awoke on the day after my return from a visit to my grandmother or one of my cousins, the change in my surroundings used to enchant me; for to every child

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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novelty is a promise of pleasure. "What will happen to me here?" I used to think. It was a vague, a wonderful hope.

Though I am a widow of thirty-five with a big son and daughter, I have succeeded in retaining a certain freshness of soul. Yet I no longer say to myself in wistful tones: "What will happen to me?" but rather: "May nothing happen!"

Nevertheless, I still feel young. Old age means wearing out. I am not worn out, although I have suffered in mind and body. Thirty-five! It is not the evening of life's day, but rather the full noontide's lengthening, the flowering of woman at her best, the open bloom of the rose on the eve of maturity. . . . If I have not aged rapidly, it is because I love life, because I am gay, brave, and a determined optimist: perhaps because I have preserved the robust health of my childhood, an equable temper and a well-balanced mind.

With open shutters, and the morning brightness casting a blue shadow over white

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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blinds bordered by yellow curtains, wrapped in a soft dressing-gown, seated at my old mahogany toilet-table, I examine my face of to-day. . . .

True, some are better looking, but some are worse ! That Madeleine Mirande, who smiles at me from between the braids of her parted hair, hasn't a wrinkle yet. But Time's invisible master fingers have not forgotten her. They have moulded the tender softness of her flesh, and, while leaving it still fresh and attractive, they have robbed it of its bloom. . . .

What remains of my youth ?

A thin, irregular French face : eyes clear, and changing in colour like the waters of the Seine beneath a Parisian sky ; hair, chestnut in the shade, golden in the sunlight. Nothing striking, nothing " pronounced," almost no colour ; but a glance which is not stupid, a smile which is not satirical, a little grace and a shadowy charm.

My mind is like my face : ordinary, devoid of genius as my countenance is of beauty.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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A woman's face, a woman's mind, with extreme femininity for its only attraction.

My story, too, is commonplace. I have had my share of trials and of grief, but nothing exceptional, nothing to entitle me to pose as a heroine. My parents surrounded me with tender solicitude. In the French manner I made a rational marriage, which everyone called a marriage of inclination. My husband, whom I lost six years ago, was brusque, authoritative, yet affectionate—ever jealous of his rights, but persuaded of his duties. There were times when he made me weep, yet his energy and intelligence were always employed in the interests of his family. Far from treating me as a mistress or a mere servant of his pleasures, he confided to me his business affairs, he informed me of his plans, he brought me into touch with all those actualities which some foolish women are too fashionable to know anything about. I was not in love with him, yet I was his devoted friend. And this friendship gave



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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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me strength, when the inevitable temptation came, to resist and overcome—for I also was tempted. Had I never been, how could I call myself virtuous, and how could I make excuses for my weaker sisters ?

Women who are too perfect only half know themselves. They can never be sure that their proud virtue may not be simply a numbness of feeling. But the woman who has been through temptation knows her strength and her weakness : she understands deeds, even those that are guilty ; decisions, even those that are foolish ; and the falls and sorrows of other women.

The man who touched my heart, who for a moment measured his power with my despair, only passed through my life. He is now consoled and married, far from France. I have never seen him again, and I do not desire to.

When he had gone, my heart was like the ocean after a storm ; the great waves had ceased to rise, but all along the horizon surged swells, slowly subsiding.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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When my husband died I sincerely mourned his loss; and, despite my solitude and my life's emptiness, I decided not to risk a second marriage—my children, a few friends, books, music, some good works, the delight of curiously observing the world's drama, the human comedy, sufficiently occupy my days.

A spectator of life—I am, I wish to be nothing more. Everything interests me intensely. Nevertheless, the absence of a partner restricts me to silent meditation when I wish for talk and lively discussion. My children are too young. In whom can I confide? I am afraid of boring my friends, who almost always talk of themselves.

That is why I begin this little book, on the first page of which I describe myself with all the sincerity which is possible to a woman who draws her own portrait. I am not going to keep a sentimental diary, nor do I aspire to the composition of a literary work. To catch life's fleeting reflections in the mirror of my woman's thought, to collect

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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impressions, opinions, portraits—may not this be an excellent remedy for ennui, a distraction from grief, an indirect mode of probing one's conscience on all manner of subjects ?

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER II

#### A GARDEN AND A LESSON

**M**Y neighbour is an old lady who lives alone in a little house. When a turn in the road reveals the thatched roof overgrown with velvety moss, the grey shutters, the little flower and vegetable garden, the white cat on the doorstep, I am reminded of fairy-tale cottages, where grandames as wise as Solomon and as malicious as sprites sit in caps and spectacles and spin. In just such a little house as this Red Riding Hood's grandmother must have lived, with just such a green walnut tree in front of the door, and just such a ribbon of smoke coming out of the chimney like one sees over houses painted by children . . . I hear a voice saying: "Lift the latch, my dear, and the bobbin will fall."

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## A GARDEN AND A LESSON

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But the dear old lady has seen me. She appears, but without cap, or spectacles, or spindle; all she has in common with a fairy godmother are a frank glance and a kind heart. We sit down under a wrinkled old walnut tree, plastered with cement on one side; and I ask my venerable friend:

“How is your garden?”

Her blue eyes brighten, while in eager tones she tells how at length the new peashells have filled out, and how well the tender artichokes are promising. She adds proudly:

“I was in the garden at five o'clock, and weeded a whole bed and dug up several rows of potatoes.”

“All by yourself?”

“All by myself. . . . And I can tell you my neighbours think the better of me. They are highly astonished to see such good work done by a woman of seventy who has lived sixty years in towns. . . . Why, my garden's almost a person. I've created it, tended it, protected it so care-

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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fully and laboriously that it has become a living and speaking thing, and it keeps me company. . . .”

I look at this patch of ground enclosed by two hedges and a railing. How tiny it is, and yet what a world! To her who cultivates it, representing all fertility and all beauty, the whole of nature, just as one little pond reflects the whole sky.

It is charming, just because it is like the house, simple and fairy-like. It has none of those rare flowers, those fine scentless monsters, those pompous plants, invented by horticultural caprice to figure as the external sign of wealth in front of sumptuous villas or in the parks of country houses. Neither does this little enclosure contain those ugly corpulent vegetables, soul-less begonias, hideous yuccas with yellow bells, or the mournful palm trees of middle-class gardens. Here are little humble old-world flowers, simple and naïve like those which adorn the refrains of peasant songs or are held in the hands of ladies in old

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## A GARDEN AND A LESSON

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pictures: the red and blue sweet pea, the scarlet sage, the purple and white petunia with scent of vanilla and clove, the white border pink, passive brother to the butterfly; the gillyflower, red, brown, and gold like Cordovan leather; the royal lily, marking the garden with the arms of France; pansies, careworn little gnomes with beards of bluish velvet; Easter daisies, a school of good little girls with frilled tuckers; larkspur with long blooms, mauve or pink, broken by the slightest breath of wind, and away under the wall facing sunwards an impressionist display of nasturtiums.

This garden has a queen—the rose, a superb lady reigning supreme over this throng of peasant flowers and baby blossoms; the rose, a thousand times more beautiful and more perfect than the costly orchid; the sturdy rose, defying frost beneath its mantle of straw, and almost untended blooming twice a year.

On the border of my lady Rose's kingdom begins the kitchen garden. And

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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from where I sit I can see the goodly round cabbages, like green leather in relief, enclosing the crystal dew as in some beautiful casket. Artichokes, too, I discern, the poor relations of that acanthus so favoured by ecclesiastical sculptors, and also the onion's filigree balls, borne proudly aloft on stems tall, stiff, and hollow.

My old friend was right. The garden is alive and vocal. It is at once an individual and a crowd. With a thousand elf-like spirits it surrounds her who has created it and who tends it. Thanks to her garden she has preserved suppleness of muscle, a physical activity which is salutary in old age and a great capacity for patience; she has gained, too, the greatest treasure of all, peace of mind.

Tended by nervous or covetous or careless hands, the garden would not have thriven. This little plot of ground demands from the gardener deliberate, regular, minute attention, untiring perseverance, and a life in harmony with the rhythm of



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## A GARDEN AND A LESSON

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the seasons. Once my old friend, crushed and overdone by the hard task of a teacher, compelled to tear here and there to earn the money for her own livelihood and the education of the nephews she had adopted, had no leisure to know herself. Now that she has passed sixty and become a country-woman, she asserts that she is beginning to live the inner life, a life at once contemplative and active.

“I assure you,” she said, “that I whose business it has been to teach am now learning from my garden! I am learning object lessons, but also lessons in philosophy. By dint of watching leaf replace leaf, insects come into life and die, flower change into fruit, ripen and fall, plants and beasts alike accomplishing their tasks, I have come to experience a sentiment hitherto unknown, a kind of fatalism, or rather a brave resignation, a voluntary acceptance of natural laws. I grieve less over the change in myself when I regard the change which is universal: the setting sun and the dying

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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summer help me also to decline gently. . . . It is sad to grow old at Paris, where everyone—but at the cost of what exertions!—preserves the appearance and manner of youth. To grow old in a garden, in sight of softly undulating hills, beneath a sky variable as the human soul, is very sweet, very consoling, very easy. One becomes once more a child and for the first time a philosopher. One reflects that a museum is not more beautiful, a church not more holy, than woods, gardens, and meadows. In the smallest things one discovers infinite mysteries and miracles which both delight and disconcert the mind. Poetry and wisdom on every hand permeate the close of life, just as the oblique rays of the setting sun penetrate into the heart of the densest foliage which is impervious to the vertical beams of noon-day.”

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## MOTHER AND SON

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### CHAPTER III

#### MOTHER AND SON

**I**N the country the great event of the morning is the postman's arrival.

Our little village, tucked away in one corner of the valley, is six miles from a railway station. As yet little known to tourists, it has long been neglected by the postal authorities. Until quite recently we have had no post office, only a pillar box, served by a dilatory, blue-bloused postman on foot, who used to appear once a day, at hours which varied according to the weather, the season, and the welcome accorded to him by the landlords of the numerous inns dotted along his route. The newspapers and letters he distributed were two or three days old. . . . The impossibility of receiving any news which was really new produced a kind of apathy and philosophical

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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resignation. We did not hear that a person was dead until after the funeral, or married until conjugal delights had begun to cloy. Sensational announcements reached us like rays from those stars which, when we become conscious of their existence, may be already consumed into dead ashes or transformed into nothingness.

Now that for a year we have had a post office and a postman who makes two rounds daily, our curiosity has revived, and especially just now. The chief interest to us all is not society scandal but politics, foreign politics—the Agadir affair, the designs of Germany, and the mysterious conversations of ministers and ambassadors.

My children read newspaper leaders with the keenest interest, recalling all the industrial geography they have learnt at school. They talk of West Africa as if they had been there. They know the regions that produce rubber and how tons of that valuable product is transported to the coast. As I listen to them I feel quite

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## MOTHER AND SON

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confused, for geography as taught in my youth was nothing but a meaningless list of difficult names. I have only the vaguest idea of some country watered by great malarial rivers, infested with serpents and mosquitos, inhabited by terrible negroes. I only know Africa through Loti's delightful book, "Le Roman d'un Spahi," which has caused me to weep almost as many tears as "Pêcheur d'Islande." But a little boy of fifteen and a maid of seventeen can certainly put me to shame. And they don't hesitate to do so.

You should hear Annette and Jean refusing to cede the Congo to Germany; you should listen to their defiant words which are far from being diplomatically prudent and are uttered with an air which the young folk of this neighbourhood have borrowed from Gavroche. You should watch them cheek by jowl bending over the printed page, the boy's dark close-cropped hair, soft as velvet, mingling with the girl's thick silky locks.

Jean looks up and cries: "Mother!"

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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“ Well, what is it ? ”

“ They are really so kind as to leave us one tiny bit of coast ! ”

“ Thank you ! Did you ever hear of anything like those Kiderlen Wæchter ! ”

“ We are surely not going to give them all that ? ” said Annette anxiously.

“ What do you think ? ”

Now they have started. And so they go on, arguing and protesting, piqued as if by personal insult. For, as inhabitants of France, do they not possess one thirty-eighth millionth fraction of our colonial empire ? They will brook no compromise, for their hearts are filled with that noble racial pride which, after twenty years' eclipse, is once more dawning in the hearts of French youth. Their talk, though childish and absurd, is pleasing and touching because of the sentiment which inspires it.

Suddenly my son asks :

“ Mother, do you think there will be war ? ”

“ I hope not.”

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## MOTHER AND SON

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“That’s all right.”

This pacifist declaration, following on so much blustering, makes me laugh. My son looks at me with surprise.

“I said ‘all right’ because I’m too young to fight. You understand, don’t you? While the others were off to the front I should be mewed up at home. . . . That I couldn’t stand! But in five or six years I should be . . .”

“Don’t, my little Jean.”

“What! Isn’t it quite natural . . . ?”

I let him talk and I seize upon an idea which occurs to me. It is a terrible thought and one of which I am ashamed, a thought which, in these days, must have come to many other women, mothers of young sons: “If war be inevitable, let it be now and not later.”

This is instinct crying from the depths. This is the voice of flesh and blood. Alas! I am no Spartan mother! . . .

I gaze at this being born of me, myself rejuvenated, transferred to another sex, rich

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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in purity, in primitive strength, rich in the long life to come. Everything about him is dear to me. Everything thrills me: his little head, his slender, muscular body, his beautiful eyes sparkling with fun, loyalty, and innocent affection, his soft, close-cut hair, and his mouth which is still a child's. I don't love him more than my daughter, but I love him differently, as women love *the man they have made*; a great pride and not a little wonder enter into my love—the pride and the wonder I felt on the day of his birth.

As I look at him it seems to me that my love, emanating and materialising, wraps him round and bathes him in a luminous halo, like some divine protection. The idea of any possible danger fills me with the mad desire to seize and take him back into myself.

War! Why, that word has awakened in me something more primitive than woman, more primitive than the human mother, the feminine animal, the female of the



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## MOTHER AND SON

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cave, who, like a beast, defended her young against beasts and also against men.

This blind and deaf instinct has only one desire: "The son of my travail must live at any cost." And it is because the shadow of death has darkened my mind that my heart throbs, that my nerves are unstrung, and that, lo! my eyes are wet with tears.

Why did I hastily wipe them away? Why did I not want my son to see my weakness?

Because there is a woman in the female, because close to instinct, but dominating it, are sentiment and reason. The centuries one after another, accumulating heredities, prejudices, and religions, have fashioned my soul! No longer am I free, even in maternity, to be nothing more than an animal. In my son I love myself and all the old ideals of my race.

I have brought him up on the model of the type of man whom I should have admired above all others. Were he to become a coward, or a weakling, or a base egoist, then

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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he would belie my creative will, he would cease to be entirely my son. I pride myself in having prepared him for virile tasks, in having accustomed him to ideas of effort, struggle, and heroic sacrifice. Through all his whims, through all his blusterings, I hear the beating of the noble little French heart which I have created.

But I am not a Spartan mother, and I write these lines with a hand that trembles and eyes that are dim.

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## THE SOLITARY

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### CHAPTER IV

#### THE SOLITARY

I HAD seen her at my mother's five or six times. She was a good soul who kept a little draper's shop. And now in my memory I see her again quite distinctly: a true Parisian of Paris, pretty, pale, and too thin, with well-dressed hair and always bending over a book.

Hers were the facile speech and vivid imagination which provoke the exclamation: "What an intelligent girl!" She regarded herself as "intellectual" because she read novels and had passed her *brevet supérieur*, because she despised domestic work and the company of the working women who were her neighbours.

She interested me, and in our brief talks I discerned a proud yet modest little soul, living on dreams and eager for love. . . .

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Her good mother, who admired without understanding her, used to say :

“She is too good to marry a working man. Her husband ought to be a clerk as well educated as herself and nice into the bargain. . . .”

Five years passed. I had forgotten both women. Then in a newspaper paragraph I read of the suicide of Mademoiselle Marguerite Deschamps, aged twenty-eight, teacher in a private school :

“It is impossible,” ran the paragraph, “to account for the fatal resolution of this unhappy girl. Mademoiselle Deschamps, who had lost her mother, lived alone and earned her own livelihood. She was not known to have contracted any *liaison*. The cause of her death must have been neurasthenia or some unknown sorrow.”

But I who know nothing hold the opinion that Marguerite Deschamps died of solitude.

Her story is that of thousands and thousands of young women of the working

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## THE SOLITARY

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or lower middle class. They are half educated, but they possess just enough culture to render them very vulnerable to the darts of destiny.

At twenty, beautiful with the flower of youth blooming on their cheeks, they are rich in hope, slightly romantic, and perhaps slightly artistic, capable of being thrilled by a poem or a melody. Good housewives they may be, yet they pride themselves on something more than the polish of their furniture or the brightness of their sauce-pans. And they dream of a serious, lovable young husband, educated up to a certain point, able to talk of something besides the office and to read something besides the *Sporting Times*.

At a working man, even when he is good and intelligent, they will not look, simply because he is ignorant of the fine shades of language. They choose a mate who comes nearer their ideal, a clerk, a shop assistant, less courageous perhaps than the working man and probably quite as vulgar.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Yet even this commonplace lot is not for all. There remain lonely women—the plain, the timid, the exacting who have expected too much, or the imprudent who have listened too readily to false promises. When their parents die these women manage to earn a meagre livelihood in some poorly paid trade. Those who have persevered in the path of virtue, the violets, which no one has gathered, strive to forget the dazzling dreams and the brief illusions of youth. But they long for something to put in their place. They look around. In their hearts and homes they find nothing but emptiness !

The aged aunts and cousins, pathetic old maids, whom they used to see in childhood waiting on invalid relatives or remaining faithful to some dead betrothed, kept parrots and perhaps were rather ridiculous ; but, after all, they were not greatly to be pitied. Some had brought up sisters' children. And this voluntary motherhood had warmed their hearts. They had received into

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## THE SOLITARY

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their arms the newly born infant, rocked the baby's cradle, scolded the naughty school-boy, taught little girls the Lord's Prayer and knitting, the catechism and embroidery.

Others with downcast eyes and compressed lips were like lay sisters. Busy counting their beads or attending services or looking after churches, they found no time to be bored. And in the bright eyes of some of them shone the pure light of their virgin souls. . . . Such women did not complain. They did not dream of suicide. . . .

But the woman of to-day, when she lacks love, lacks everything. She no longer believes in the compensations of eternal life, in the ineffable consolation imparted by the presence of her God. Barren griefs drive her to despair. Even her chastity, defended against man's desire, no longer appears to her the most heavenly of the virtues. She no longer prides herself on being a lily. And when for a while work grows scarce and starvation threatens and health breaks down, then the lonely, love-

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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less, childless woman seeks a resting-place on the muddy bed of the Seine.

Thus do many women die every year, not through sentimental despair, not through poverty, but because their lives have become unbearable and because to-morrow promises to be a mere repetition of to-day.

Can they be said to die? No, for they have never lived. They merely exchange emptiness for emptiness. They are more wretched than her whom her lover has deceived. For such a martyr to passion has had her share of intense, thrilling life; the future may have better things in store for her. . . .

What is the remedy? . . . Perhaps a more serious education, less sentimental dreaming, closer union between women of all classes, the practise of a wider charity. And, on men's part, more kindness and more courage.

Poor Marguerite Deschamps! The hand of a tender, loyal companion or of a little child would have led you to wisdom and simple happiness.



## CHAPTER V

### BY THE SEA

**H**ERE I am, with Annette and Jean, staying with our friends the Destricourts, at Rosberghe-sur-Mer, in Belgium. We were invited for the last week in August, but our hosts are already talking of keeping us until mid-September.

Louis Destricourt was my husband's greatest friend at the *lycée* and then at the university. Both of them, it appears, were passionately addicted to chemistry, and they dreamed of one day equalling Chevreul and Berthelot. And yet when Georges left the laboratory it was to walk the hospitals, and Louis to become the partner of his rich cousin Destricourt in some dye-works. Both the young doctor and the young manufacturer, one in Paris the other in

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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the provinces, remained faithful to the memories of earlier years, and each continued to love in his friend his own glad distant youth.

No people in the world can be happier than the Destricourts, and none can better deserve happiness. Though rich, they have none of the *parvenu's* ostentatious pride. Very united as a family, they have a few innocent little prejudices; but they are not in the least pharisaical. *Bourgeois*, certainly, yet not *blasé*; not at all artistic, but not in the least snobbish. I might liken them to good wheaten bread, which one would not dream of offering as a delicacy at a party, but which one may eat every day, at every meal, and never grow tired of. . . .

Since I have been a widow, the Destricourts have given me a thousand touching proofs of their friendship; and I know that in their home Georges Mirande's wife and children are always welcome.

Nevertheless, Germaine Destricourt and

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## BY THE SEA

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I are very different. I like reading and I have artistic tastes. Not in vain have I lived with an intelligent man, bristling with intellectual curiosity and enamoured of controversy and discussion. The excellent Destricourt is chiefly interested in business and a little in politics. He has never exerted the slightest influence over his wife, who is nothing but a mother and house-keeper. Germaine has five children, all huge, gay, fresh-coloured and fair-haired, so fair that they remind one of the ogre's golden crowned children. The health, the education, the virtues, and the failings of her brood form the one concern of this superb mother. Tall, with pink and white complexion, radiant beneath her glorious coronet of yellow hair, she might well represent the Flemish goddess of Fecundity. In build and temperament she and her husband are well matched. All seven—parents and children—fill with noisy life the *châlet* Rubens, thus named because it recalls, though ever so faintly, the old Antwerp style.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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The Rosberghe chalets are strange. On treeless, barren sands, where even thistles and wild pinks refuse to grow, by a sea with never a suggestion of blue, barely green on the brightest days and generally sad and grey, these chalets have sprung up in a few years. In these curious constructions between dune and beach, Belgian and German architects have given their fancy free play. The walls of the buildings are of brick; the windows of green glass, highly arched into tiny, convex, hexagonal panes; the roofs gabled or mansard or high pitched or overspreading, leaden-coloured, and so heavy as to seem to threaten to crush the house, or to weight it to the ground for fear it should be blown away by a gust of wind. Along the dike is a kind of boulevard. There, the ground being dearer, the houses are narrower and very high, like a cake cut in very thin slices and crudely striped with jam and angelica.

The whole is not beautiful. Yet the vivid colouring of the woodwork and the

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## BY THE SEA

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irregularities of the sombre roofs attract the gaze of the passer-by, like certain British pictures. It borders on the grotesque, but it just escapes being absurd. And I prefer *l'art nouveau* of Rosberghe-sur-Mer to the Swiss chalets, the trumpery Trianons, the Turkish constructions, and the Pompeian terraces which our architects persist in building for timid, tasteless clients.

At certain hours these Rosberghe chalets discharge troops of children as fair as the Destricourts, and almost all wearing scarlet jerseys. Attended by elder sisters and placid mothers they swarm over the pale yellow sand. The ladies who stay at Rosberghe all belong to that race of giantesses of which my friend Germaine is a striking specimen. They lack delicacy. The refined elegance of the merest little Parisian mouse would cast them into the shade. But how striking! what freshness! what wealth of hair! and what fine complexions!

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Rosberghe is a family watering-place, and the Destricourts had said to me: "You will see how quiet we are there!" . . .

Accordingly, I took with me a few books, some music, and a table-cloth in drawn thread work, which I am working with a deliberation worthy of Penelope. Great was my astonishment therefore to find other guests at my friends' house at Rosberghe, and friends of these guests, and their neighbours' guests also. There were thirty or forty of us. And we all bathed together, walked together, waded together, and dined in turn at each other's houses. Chance and not affinity has assembled most of these people, who have little to say to each other, and yet who stay together; for to whom else should they go? They contrive to be very gay. I don't know whether they are really amused, but they make a great noise. Germaine and her family lead the dance, rather heavily perhaps for the middle-aged men and their ladies, who are ever young and frolicsome. They

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## BY THE SEA

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laugh from morning to night, and when they stop laughing they shout. The order of the day is nothing but charades, games, dances, comic songs, gymkhanas and processing of motor-cars.

I have no objection to honest gaiety ; yet when laughter is stilled I should like to talk, but at the Desticourts' laughter never is stilled. I shall be driven to conclude that excessively cheerful people are but sounding brass or tinkling cymbals. Their intelligence, concentrated on one single subject—business for the men, housekeeping and clothes for the women—would vanish completely in silence and repose.

When the men remain an hour together, they always end by talking shop. When the women foregather, they inevitably take up the eternal refrain of children, servants, and fashions. As soon as one tries to raise the tone of conversation they begin to air opinions borrowed from magazines and couched in conventional, commonplace

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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terms, of which they possess a repertory ready for any subject.

“Are they really so stupid?” I ask. No, they are neither stupid nor intelligent. They are wrapt in a kind of intellectual slumber. They are incapable of grasping anything which is not concrete, visible, and sensible; everything which does not directly concern them.

Their husbands at least possess the practical intelligence which is developed by the exercise of a profession. They go further and mix in social life. But as for the women, an open sunshade serves to obliterate the whole horizon. They are much less developed than the women of a so-called lower class who earn their bread. And a book-keeper at her desk, or a teacher in her school, or a clerk in her office, seems to me much more interesting, more alive, more supple, more of a personality than these good ladies of the middle class, who, I will not deny it, are endowed with a certain virtue and a certain grace.



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## MODE AND MATERNITY

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### CHAPTER VI

#### MODE AND MATERNITY

**T**HE Rosberghe season continued through a fine, hot, golden September.

Yesterday five or six of us were sitting round the tea-table in the projecting verandah which overlooks the dike. We were watching the people strolling up and down before bathing-time. Almost everyone was wearing a white summer costume, for at those northern watering-places there had never been so much muslin and linen worn. Nearly all the women appeared young and charming in their pretty straight-cut frocks with fichus crossed above the waist, and embroidered bonnets recalling the peasants' caps of the eighteenth century.

But mature dames and younger women

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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endowed with comfortable embonpoint, tall English maidens, broad Flemings and French-women inclined to stoutness, did not look well in short skirts and tight high waisted tunics. The modern style, which is at once severe and easy, becomes graceful slightness. It gives height to short figures, and to matrons of forty imparts the elegance and suppleness of youth. But young women of the robust Valkyrian type it makes look like matrons disguised as little girls. The short skirt accentuates their corpulence and exposes their feet, which in American shoes look larger than they need. Despite all efforts to confine such figures in corsets, their hips expand and their busts protude. Thus travestied, they lose all the attractions of power and majesty which belong to their type.

Desticourt, who is gifted with sound sense, marvelled at the extraordinary weakness of the fair sex in thus submitting to the tyranny of fashion. He maintained that it would be delightful to see a strong,

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## MODE AND MATERNITY

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fair, fresh coloured woman clothed in the ample velvet, the sumptuous lace and the large hat of H el ene Fourment, while a slender shadowy blonde should affect the soft muslins of English beauties painted by Lawrence. A young girl with pretty irregular face, frank eyes, and intelligent smile might well wear a high waist with sash and fichu and the bonnet of the *Accord e de Village*. In this way fashion would escape from that uniformity which, by rapidly making a mode common, creates a need for constant change. . . . Germaine replied that such freedom would put an end to fashion. If the eye would grow accustomed to some particular line or ornament, general acceptance is necessary. A style appears peculiar when only adopted by a few, but when worn by the multitude it seems ordinary, usual, and typical of the period.

“Is it absolutely necessary, then, for thousands of women to disfigure themselves by trying to conform to a type of beauty

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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alien to their build and race?" asked Jacques Wallers.

I replied that instead of conforming to fashion an intelligent woman makes fashion conform to her. Frequently all that is needed to preserve the individual harmony of figure is the lengthening of a skirt, the widening of a sleeve, the raising or lowering of a belt.

But such adaptations require a great deal of taste, a perfect cut and, in a word, the art of a first-rate dressmaker. Fashion's favourites are not elderly ladies or stout young women.

"Fashion is indecent," said Madame Jacques Wallers, who is decidedly plump.

"I know a young married woman," said Germaine, "whom those close fitting costumes become perfectly. When I asked her whether she had 'hopes' she replied quite naïvely that she was postponing her experience of the sufferings and joys of maternity until next year. 'I am told,' she added, 'that next year full skirts will be in fashion. The tight fitting garments

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## MODE AND MATERNITY

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of to-day make prospective maternity immodest. . . .’”

“How true it is,” said Henri Delannoy, “that fashion reflects the manners, the habits, and even the ideas of a period. When Rousseau convinced women of the grace of maternity and of the attractiveness of a mother nursing her infant, women let out their skirts and crossed their fichus. The love poems and the sentimental pictures of the day did homage to ample beauty and mature charms. A woman was ashamed of looking like a boy; and to the flat chested Madame d’Epinay Jean Jacques preferred her cousin d’Houdetot, the attractively plain author of—forgive me, ladies and gentlemen—an ode entitled: ‘L’Hymne aux tétons.’”

“Naturally,” said Germaine, laughing, that lady’s attraction must have been ample enough to satisfy the philosopher. . . . For women don’t praise charms which they don’t possess.”

“It was a woman’s femininity and not

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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any ambiguous grace that appealed to our grandfathers," resumed Delannoy. "They were pleased when a woman appeared obviously a woman created for love and maternity. . . . But look at our Parisians, how they flatten any prominence of figure, how they diet themselves, how they confine their bodies in mummy-like sheathes in order to attain to the literary ideal of the perverted angel, the Hermaphrodite and the Androgyn. The most beautiful suggest Baudelaire's dancing serpent, the most charming travestied young men. . . ."

The present fashion, if exaggerated, becomes the negation of femininity. To frivolous creatures it suggests that to be beautiful they must be barren. And notice that fashion follows literature and helps to create that type of modern women conceived by our novelists.

This modern woman is a pretty, careless creature, who does not think, who seldom loves, and who never becomes a mother. She is a soulless, heartless doll! Who would

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## MODE AND MATERNITY

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now dare to speak of the touching poetry and beauty of a young mother ?

One hears the childlessness of French-women deplored. . . . But they are not encouraged to become mothers, for by the select few who set the fashion in dress and ideas maternity is regarded as a kind of blemish and rather ridiculous. I know young girls of the middle class who long to resemble Claudine. . . . Claudine may be intelligent, but let us hope that there are not many like her.

When maternity is respected, when motherhood lends a new charm and a new grace to women, then these boyish fashions will disappear.

“ We must have another Jean Jacques,” says Desticourt. “ But if he returned to our world, he would not now be satisfied with writing, he would turn dressmaker. And that would be one way of carrying on his propaganda.”

“ Bah ! ” said one young woman. “ He would have readers, but no customers.”

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# MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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## CHAPTER VII

### PARIS IN AUTUMN

**F**AREWELL to Rosberghe and its variegated villas. Farewell to its pale yellow sands by a grey sea. Farewell to its damp, green meadows intersected by poplar bordered canals reflecting a fleecy sky, and its little Spanish towns nestling round a Flemish belfry.

Here is Paris, and here is my house, asleep in the darkness of closed shutters, with its furniture in holland covers, its candelabra swathed in muslin, its carpetless floors and its atmosphere of camphor and naphthalene.

After two or three days' sojourn here we shall set out for my house in the woods, for my true home is away down at Rouvrenoir.

We used to pass our summers in some hired villa or Breton or Auvergne hotel,



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## PARIS IN AUTUMN

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according to my husband's fancy. Georges liked a change every year, hence the annual recurrence of similar experiences and similar adventures. Thus it has fallen to my lot to know every kind of landlord, surly and amiable; to visit chalets in which the slightest sound could be heard; damp, romantic little old châteaux, inns perched on hilltops, cosmopolitan palaces, gloomy gardens overshadowed by heavy trees, barren wastes enclosed by wire fencing. After two months in the country I was always delighted to return to my own flat, to my own furniture, to my Paris.

I recall the mornings on the quays, when the glowing golden light gradually scatters the mist, and when towers, steeples, and façades intermingled with greenery slowly assume that grey and reddish-brown into which there enters an almost imperceptible shade of soft ethereal blue. . . . And those beautiful red and yellow sunsets, the silent agitations of the clouds, the sunlight and the vapour over the tranquil river,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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reflecting on its polished surface and then growing dark. I loved the stiffly cut trees, the geometrical flower-beds of Paris gardens, the browns and the reds, the pleached alleys, the display of dahlias, asters, and chrysanthemums; flowers brilliant yet sad as an October afternoon.

I was very young then; and the atmosphere of Paris, its noise, its lights and its movement thrilled me deliciously in brain and nerve, and, stimulating every sense, quickened the pulse of life. During the first days especially I could not keep quiet. . . .

I used to go out, nominally to shop, to visit a milliner or a dressmaker, but really to look at Paris, to listen to it, to take possession of it once more by imprinting my footsteps upon it as I walked quickly up and down.

One year—ah, how long ago it seems already! I returned to Paris with a vague hope in my heart, an affection involuntary and unconfessed. I had a friend, young

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## PARIS IN AUTUMN

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like myself, and our innocent flirtation during the winter had grown into something more, but not yet into anything serious. On the Tuileries terrace I see myself, a little Parisian of twenty-three, in a frock still charming to my memory though it would seem old fashioned now. I was holding by the hand my fair haired son, who was proud of his first boy's suit and his sailor cap. Suddenly quite near me a rather hesitating voice said : Good morning, madame ; good morning little Jean."

The child was tired. We sat down on wicker chairs. . . . I had not a fear, not a pang of remorse, not a guilty thought ; I was glad to be young, glad to be *I*. A dignified old man, with many decorations, passed. He looked at me curiously with a glance of kindness, regret, and envy. . . . My companion told me his name : he was an aged poet and very famous. . . . How I pited him and his glory !

But what am I writing ! Why such retrospection ? Look at your mirror,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Madeleine, and see the silver thread upon your brow. . . .

Now I prolong my holiday and stay at Rouvrenoir till All-hallows. When I return to Paris in November, as soon as I reach the station a strange sensation comes over me, a wonder, a bewilderment, a sense of loneliness. . . . Paris, with its street lights and its carriage lamps, its wet, sticky pavements, its homeless crowds, its wealth and poverty, its luxury and hideousness swarming in the twilight, inspires me with a kind of horror and a desire to weep.

Before becoming thoroughly acclimatised, I feel as ill at ease as some placid provincial newly arrived in our "Babylon."

I seem to have left peace and truth and fallen upon din and falsehood. . . . And then I grow accustomed! And in less than a week Paris has reconquered me. But what causes this passing agitation, this resistance which my whole moral being offers to the seductions of Paris? Is it because I am growing old? Or has communion with

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## PARIS IN AUTUMN

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nature benumbed the energy of my mind and spirit ?

No! It is something different. It is a state of feeling which is not peculiar to me, I am sure, but which I experience in common with many women in the forties. In early youth one carries one's joy with one. It lights up the whole universe; and one lives an overflowing, an exuberant, a radiant life. A little later life becomes more self-centred. It is no less ardent, but the secret of its mysterious intensity resides in the depths of one's own heart.

A Parisian of our station in life, the richer, the more fortunate, the more highly favoured she is, the less time has she for self-knowledge. She knows her own face through its reflection in the glass; she knows her own mind through its reflection in books, plays, and conversation. But all she knows of herself is her emotions, her desires, her griefs, which are mere quiverings fleeting and superficial. The depths do not appear save under the shock of passion,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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of great sorrow, or in the serenity of solitude.

Serene solitude is to be found in the country. There a woman who has fled from the tiresome and the indiscreet, from those who cast words like pebbles on to the transparent surface of silent meditation, may at length perceive her soul. Alone she need no longer bustle, paint, assume conventional attitudes and be a creature of appearances and illusions. Solitude favours sincerity. She knows what she believes, what she wishes, what she mourns, what she loves.

But the close of autumn brings her back to Paris. Then the mask will be resumed. The once silent mouth will utter falsehoods and platitudes. Eyes distracted by multitudinous sights will cease to perceive anything but the surface of creatures and things. Ears solicited by diverse voices will grow deaf to the secret word of the soul.

Therefore how greatly to be envied are

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## PARIS IN AUTUMN

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women who know how to hold the world at bay, and in the noisy desert of Paris to create for themselves an oasis of silence and of solitude !

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER VIII

#### A FRENCH PEASANTESS

**A**T last it is over . . . this glorious, terrible summer! The first fall of rain wove a silver veil midway 'twixt earth and heaven, a veil which, when it vanished, revealed the smile of sad and royal autumn.

In a few days the atmosphere has completely changed. It no longer clothes the hills in soft, transparent blue. It has grown dense with mist, and as soon as the sun begins to set it assumes a delicate purple hue. The scents it wafts to our nostrils are different, too. The perfume of vanilla and wheat which emanated from the summer dust has been succeeded by an aroma of ripe fruit and the bitter smoke-like smell of crushed leaves.

In our Ile de France October is not now



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## A FRENCH PEASANTESS

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a gay vintager with painted cheeks, dancing in brimming vat. He wears no crown of grapes and vine branches. At once woodlander and shepherd, he bears in his basket the ruddy apple and the soft tinted pear, the rosy toadstool, the little red or blueish hawthorn and sloeberries, and the poisonous but beautiful meadow saffron.

With the close of summer the Parisian holiday-makers have departed. They have left this fine October to the peasants, and also perhaps to us. I love to walk on the wet roads, to watch the patches of sky reflected in the puddles, and to listen to the voices of the farm-labourers. Scattered here and there, they are busy at work, beneath the crows' circling flight, pushing the plough-share through the soft earth.

How beautifully these labourers harmonise with the landscape, and how perfectly their primitive movements and their massive forms complete the restful lines of the plain!

Their coarse cotton or corduroy clothes

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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are in keeping with the tones of the vast autumnal picture. They reproduce the roof's drab brown, the dim colour of goat and sheep, the browns of treebark, of ploughed earth, of glistening chestnuts, and of medlars just nipped by the frost. One faded blouse is blue like the sky when it is ruffled by the west wind. One bright belt is as vivid as the little poppy blooming all alone in the stubble.

I like peasants. But I will not venture to say that I know them. Only after infinite care and long patience may we penetrate into these mistrustful souls, bolted like dwellings at night-time and never opened wide, not even to friends and kinsfolk. But now that for some years I have been living among them, they have grown to be something more than mere literary associations. I begin to understand them. . . .

Not far from my house, on a plateau known as *Chêne-Pourpre*, at the back of a yard more grass grown and with more mounds than a cemetery, is a low farm-house

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## A FRENCH PEASANTESS

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flanked by outbuildings. In front of it passes the chief road of the neighbourhood. All the other houses of the hamlet are on one side of this dwelling, while on the other extends poor pasture land, a kind of stony heath, with willows and pines growing out of the heather. Beyond is the forest, and at the road's end the setting sun.

Along that road I take my evening walk, and I never fail to pause by the farm-house. It is the lamp-light hour, when each tiny home seems to draw its hood of thatch down to its twinkling windows, while the dog, loosed from the latch, barks at the moon. In the deserted farm dwelling there is not a light, not a sound. Over the blind windows the spiders of oblivion are spinning their ashy shrouds.

An old woman lived there once. She was tall and trim; and to me she always seemed the finest type of French peasantess. She must, I think, have served as model to the author of "La Maison du Péché," for in *Jacquine Férou* she is painted to the life. She

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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was a creature of a great heart and of great courage. She was poor, though all her life she had worked as hard and harder than any man. Poor Mother Lalandre! She never had any luck. But she bore her misfortunes with untiring patience and a resignation which was almost fatalism. Her wiry arms, her fingers knotted with rheumatism, her straight shoulders, her flat chest, the whole of her sinewy, bony body seemed destined to be as durable as stone or tree.

Neither seasons, nor sorrows, nor daily toil left any mark upon her hardened form, her resolute soul. We liked each other; and often at twilight, when the cows were being led by ropes home from the pond, I used to talk to Mother Lalandre. My heart is touched as I recall her fine old face, furrowed by age, and her simple, pronounced features, illuminated beneath her kerchief by light brown eyes. A blue stone hung from one ear. She was always frank and kind.

From my talks with her I learnt many

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## A FRENCH PEASANTESS

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things. For country-folk are superior to us town-dwellers in this, that they only speak of what they know and never affect false knowledge in order to impress their hearers. When they have nothing to say, they say nothing. For silence does not trouble them. They don't philosophise like the artisan who poses as a social reformer; they utter their wisdom in short sentences and phrases which express the experience of generations.

This was the wisdom I discerned in Mother Lalandre's conversation. It was coloured by the peasant's actual and absolute cast of thought, yet touched with the scepticism which is never absent from a French mind. Its racy expression in a language, compact of quaint archaisms and nearer to our classic tongue than commonplace or decadent Parisian, delighted me. If one would hear the echo of the vanished voice of remote centuries one need not penetrate to the provinces where a *patois* is spoken still impregnated with Latinity. That vanished voice Gérard de Nerval

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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recognised with delight in the vague songs of the Senlis maidens. Nothing brings home to me more powerfully the antiquity of our race. Now and again some poor churl, some unlettered woman will reproduce the very tone and the very expressions of our ancestors in their plaints and their fabliaux. An unexpected word in a trivial phrase gives me that same thrill of delight that I feel when in some uninteresting country I come upon a crumbling Norman church hidden away in the trees.

Now the farm-house is empty.

On October evenings, loitering by the closed gate, I look in vain for that rude, venerable, peasant form. She, who laboured, suffered and endured so long, now rests for the first time. Gradually mingling with earth, she enters into the substance of that countryside which she loved so well. May that earth rest lightly upon her, light as the pine-tree's shade, light as the belfry's shadow, which, turning round with the hours, blesses every tomb in turn.

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## OTHERS' HAPPINESS

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### CHAPTER IX

#### OTHERS' HAPPINESS

I AM sad this evening. . . .

Alone in my room, I listen to the house sounds dying away: my daughter's light foot on the second floor, my servants' laughter in the kitchen: the mewling of my yellow cat, impatient to be off on its nocturnal hunt, the closing of doors, the drawing of bolts, and then silence. . . .

No, not quite silence. . . . A chorus of weak, sad little voices whisper round the deep arm-chair in which I am resting, tired out: they are a few last drops of sap fizzling out of the log on the fire; a dying flame trying to flicker up through the lichen-coloured ashes on the hearth; the lamp smoking a little; a velvety butterfly dropping from the ceiling, palpitating in a

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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circle, and then suddenly pausing, as if in a trance, pinned to the curtain by fear; a bunch of asters shedding their purple petals upon the marble surface of the table; and out of doors autumn sighing in the branches.

With elbow on knee and chin in hand, I gaze into the fire with wide searching eyes, and I listen. . . . Little voices of solitude, how humble, how fearful, how sad you are to-night! Voices of departing, of vanishing, of fleeting things, why do you fill my heart with a vague sorrow? I am not unhappy. I have five children, a few friends, a heart which was once too sensitive but is now valiant. The world ignores me, the malicious forget me. . . . I am still young, and I shall know how to grow old gracefully. No, no, I am not unhappy.

Yet I am vexed because Marie-Louise has been. . . .

She is my friend. Not long ago I saw her suffer, and I loved her because of her sorrow. I was her confidant and the big



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## OTHERS' HAPPINESS

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sister who comforted her. But when happiness came after tempests and disasters, she neglected me, like the patient who, when he is cured, ceases to visit his doctor. If by chance she spared me an hour, she could talk of nothing but of "him," her love, her dear love, from whom she had been parted too long. And I admired that glorious egoism, that naïve boldness of the woman who wears her secret like a nosegay at her breast and who is so bathed in an atmosphere of love that other women are irritated and a trifle intoxicated by it.

I was not jealous. Oh no! That another woman is happy proves that happiness exists and that one may reasonably expect it for oneself. It is the winning of the prize by others that encourages one to take tickets in a lottery. A grand passion, a beautiful book, a heroic deed show that life is not so bad since it blossoms sometimes into love, beauty, and devotion. The envious soul must be a pessimist. That soul does not know what personal encouragement, what

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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wholesome consolation may be derived from the happiness of others.

But envious folk abound. The absences of Marie-Louise in Spain, Sicily, and Norway were ill explained. Serious people noticed them and were permanently scandalised. They used to say: "But it is disgraceful. Did you ever see such effrontery? However, it will all come to a bad end. . . ." And these serious persons were delighted by the idea that the lovers' happiness would be short lived.

But it did not come to a bad end. It did not end at all. Marie-Louise renewed her youth and her beauty, which is a sure and certain sign of happiness in love. And pharisaical morality was more and more scandalised. Her kind little friends stoned this woman who had done them no harm. But she did not even notice it. She was listening to her own heart and paying no heed to the clashing among the pots and pans of slander. . . .

For the first time after four months I

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## OTHERS' HAPPINESS

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saw Marie-Louise to-day. She arrived unexpectedly in a motor-car. And at a glance I saw by her worn look and her unaccustomed reserve that she had suffered. I took her to the fresh, golden wood ; and there beneath the beech trees I made her sit by my side. And there at once, with her head upon my shoulder, she burst into tears and cried like a little child.

Then how I trembled for her ! I suspected some terrible tragedy, some betrayal, some cruel desertion. . . . And with the pity I felt for my friend and my anger at the man's wickedness was mingled a curious sentiment—that of the artist when he sees a masterpiece spoiled. I questioned Marie-Louise like a mother. But she could only utter half-finished sentences, sighs and sobs, and suddenly, with a tragic air, she took a letter from her bag :

“ There, read it, Madeleine,” she said ;  
“ you will see how he treats me.”

And I read it. . . . Good Heavens !  
what curious creatures these lovers are !

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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This terrible tragedy was nothing but a trivial disagreement, a stupid quarrel. These two disputants, who were ready to tear each other in pieces, were really of the same opinion. But he jealous, she proud and impetuous, each was determined to have his or her say and neither would listen to the other. Hence this discord.

I reassured Marie-Louise. I read aloud to her her friend's letter and those angry reproaches, beneath which I could easily discern a secret sigh and a plaintive regret.

She dried her tears and said: "Then do you think that at heart he really loves me? . . ." And I saw that she was gradually becoming sure of it herself.

The sun was bathing us in his beams. The dark spring waters were bearing beech leaves like little boats upon their breast. I could see the undulating meadows through the trees and the long restful lines of the hills. "When I am sixty," I thought, "I shall sit here with Marie-Louise and an old gentleman who will be her husband.

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## OTHERS' HAPPINESS

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And I shall say to her : ' Do you remember ? ' Then she will say : ' Yes, I was mad.' "

Suddenly I shivered. . . . It must have been the night mist.

She is gone. She is with the man she loves, and I keep watch, listening to the flaming fire, the flickering lamp, and the rain on the dark night.

How many a lonely woman thus keeps vigil, in rooms which love enters no more, or perhaps has never entered ! . . . I think of widows and of virgins breaking their mirrors when they perceive the first wrinkle on their brow. I think of those who kiss some dim photograph or a few faded dusty flowers, and of all that silent, reserved feminine world which by day wears the mask of resignation and by night with closed doors and naked soul looks out towards the grey future.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER X

#### DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

**I**N these days memory's bell tolls in one's heart. It is the Festival of All Saints, the Festival of our Dead! In the year's gay garland, these days are two violet flowers, two pale scentless scabias. They are out of keeping with the season of autumn, which brings them. I always see these days in one monotonous colour, in a close, heavy atmosphere impenetrable to the feeblest rays of light, where sounds are deadened and silence suggests the supernatural. It is almost as if the material world, like some misty scene or vague vision, were hovering on the verge of the invisible.

Behind this veil one seems conscious of mysterious presences, the formless, ageless world of the dead. We call them "ghosts" and "shades." Vain and empty words,

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## DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

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pictures rather than names! Immaterial as breath, elusive as shadow portraits exposed to the light, nothing more perhaps than an effort of memory. Created by our desire, preserved by our piety, they live in our remembrance and really never die save with the last thought of their last friend.

To our dead are these two days given that they may live once more, a life like a reflection in a mirror. And now on the depths of our hearts their vague profiles imprint themselves and grow plainer. They emerge from oblivion, one by one, with those dear faces and those well-remembered glances. . . . Dead parents, children we have lost, friends who have departed. . . . How your silent throng increases with every new All-hallows!

To-night, in my lonely room, you are all present, faithful to the rendezvous. And as soon as I see you, I feel my heart torn as on the fatal night of farewell. O dear beings, emerging from the night of infinity, you whom my faithful affection still rescues

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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from inevitable annihilation, stay awhile, stay until the firelight dies, until the lamp flickers down, until slumber seals my weeping eyes. I will not be consoled, my friends, because only through my suffering comes your resurrection in my heart, because to-morrow you will return to the secret chamber of my memory; and then my thoughts, though they will not desert you, will be distracted by other things. To-night, pale, sorrowing, and in tears, I belong to you entirely. I stretch out my arms towards you. I call you and you come near. Your mystic circle closes. Parents, friends, and you, my little girl . . . Alas!

It is a sad feast, and yet how dear! Who would wish to have forgotten, and having grown careless, to be alone to-night, beholding no cherished countenances of the past, hearing no loved voice! To-night, in every house, there are men and women watching as I watch, weeping as I weep, surrounded by the shades of loved ones. To-night all over the world resound the



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## DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

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sobs of mothers, children, widows ; a vague sound of many appeals—" Mother," cries one ; " my child," says another. . . . And the dead, thus summoned, emerge from nothingness.

To-morrow, crowds in mourning will go to the cemeteries bearing glittering wreaths of sad bitter flowers, frosted o'er, in colour like blood or an autumn twilight. Grief will find some consolation in tending the tombs of the departed and in adorning their graves—in repainting the letters on the disfigured stones, in removing weeds, in setting up a fallen railing, in pressing down into the moist earth pots of pansies and chrysanthemums.

And when the work is done and tears have been shed, one walks slowly through the vast city of the dead, pausing in front of famous tombs, admiring costly marbles, beautiful flowers, and eloquent epitaphs. And then one goes home, tired and consoled, thinking to have kept the feast of the dead, the feast of remembrance. But, after all, it

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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is mere make-believe ; these rites and ceremonies are only conventional. The true feast of remembrance is kept in secret, alone, with a reserve which is as jealous as love, and far from cemeteries and the mourning of strangers and that horrible funeral pomp which suggests thoughts of corruption. I will not seek my loved ones among those crumbling remains, even now almost reduced to nothingness and soon to be absorbed in the ground. They are not there. They are in my heart.

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## FLAT-HUNTING

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### CHAPTER XI

#### FLAT-HUNTING

“**S**O, my dear Madeleine, we rely upon you to find us a flat in a good neighbourhood, near a church and a market. I am economical and I intend to do the marketing myself. . . . I am devout, and I want to attend church without tiring my old legs. My son and his wife insist on a modern house with American conveniences (*sic*), electric light, heating apparatus, and even a telephone. My chief requirement is that the other tenants of the house should be nice. . . . A provincial like myself, over sixty and obliged to come and live in Paris in order not to be parted from her children, could not tolerate a certain class of neighbours. You couldn't imagine your Aunt Emily next door to an actress or a lady of doubtful reputation.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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And, finally, don't forget that our rooms must be spacious. As for the rent, we are prepared to be liberal, say a hundred pounds, if it is really a good neighbourhood."

Dear old Aunt Emily! She penned this charming letter in her low, panelled drawing-room, furnished in the worst Second Empire style. She wrote it sitting at her mahogany bureau with her feet on a terrible flowered wool-work rug, by a window looking on to La Rue de la Temporalité. The kindness of these provincials makes their ugly surroundings seem almost pleasing. Poor Aunt Emily! Dear old plant which is going to be uprooted!

She has set me a hard task. All day I have been tearing about Paris, and now I return to my house in the country, worn out, wet through, and aching in every limb.

I am reminded of the sarcastic pity with which a modern novelist describes noble ladies in reduced circumstances taking refuge in some modern house near the Luxembourg, "where the waifs and strays

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## FLAT-HUNTING

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of life may find shelter, and where the rent does not exceed one hundred and thirty pounds" (*sic*). For the modest rental of one hundred and thirty pounds many persons who are hardly waifs and strays would not object to live in rooms which, though unpretentious, are light, pretty, and comfortable.

I know my Paris ; and it was not in the fashionable quarters that I looked for my aunt's future abode, which must be near a church and a market. I haunted the Ternes and the Batignolles. I wandered from Saint-Germain-des-Prés to the Invalides. I must have mounted in a lift more than fifty stories, and without a lift more than twenty-five.

I saw those modern flats which my young cousin likes. There are thousands of them, and all the same : a passage dignified by the title of hall, a drawing-room and a dining-room with panelled doors, always decorated alike and according to rigid rule, with ripolin and lincrusta in Louis XVI

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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design. And everywhere there is the same crude, monotonous whiteness, just like a laboratory or a hospital.

Yes, when one is twenty-five and lives in la Rue de la Temporalité, Roc-sur-Cère, one naturally likes all this display of whiteness and the graceful elegance of imitation panelling. My young cousin is a very wide-awake provincial, who is never more than six months behind the latest fashion, and who prides herself on adoring everything English. At Roc-sur-Cères she loves to fancy herself at Paris, draped, turbaned, and sitting in a room furnished in excellent imitation eighteenth-century style. Thin, treacherous, creaking doors and cruelly glaring electric light have no terrors for her. She, who is pleased to be known as "La Dame à la Caro-Delvaille," dreams of a truly Parisian environment in which she will receive friends, whom as yet she does not know, and admirers with whom she will very soon become acquainted.

But poor Aunt Emily! I imagine her

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## FLAT-HUNTING

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in this flimsy abode, exposed to the brutal brilliance of electric light, with her lovely silver hair dulled by the horrid glare, and her wrinkles outlined by dark shadows. She will lose all that charm which now makes her look like some beautiful old pastel. Her black dress, the widow's weeds she has worn for ten years, will look strangely incongruous among the vivid silks and dazzling whiteness of her Paris flat. Her cushioned arm-chairs, her imitation Boule toilet-table, and her four-post bedstead will make her room seem small and stuffy. She will tremble, like the ornaments and candelabra, at the passing of motors, trams, and the invisible tube which cracks thin walls and makes clocks go wrong.

Poor Aunt Emily! For her sake, and because I must not exceed the one hundred pounds rental, I will look again in the Saint-Sulpice quarter. There, perhaps, I may discover some suitable house in a quiet street of hotels for priests and hard-working students. The rooms must be lofty, the

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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window-seats deep, the floors irregular, and a soft green light must come in from the acacia shaded garden. There the solemn Sunday bells may be heard. And there Aunt Emily may take root again and live. She would die in a flat decorated with lincrusta.

And my young cousin? Am I to be false to her? What will she say?

She will not say anything. For on the authority of writers most in vogue, I shall persuade Colette that this *art nouveau* is really out of fashion, and that if one would be in the movement and cannot afford the decorations of a Russian ballet, one must surround oneself with antiques and live in a flat like those Balzac describes in his novels. Let my young cousin affect *la vieille bourgeoisie française*, let her pose as one of Balzac's heroines. Let her live in Utrecht velvet and mahogany. Let her put back the clock on to the mantelpiece and cover it with a glass shade. She is clever and pretty, and she will not fail to



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## FLAT-HUNTING

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produce some pleasing harmony from these ugly things. Just as this winter one sees absurd incongruous frocks look quite graceful with fringes and floating stoles, and quaint little flowers which look as if they had been torn out of aunt's wool rug.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR  
Circulating Library  
CHAPTER XII

### MADEMOISELLE SNOBINETTE AT THE AUTUMN SALON

**A**T last I have found just the flat for Aunt Emily. And before the family makes its exodus from Roc-sur-Cère Colette has come to Paris to inspect, decorate, and furnish the new abode.

Cousin Colette is an advanced provincial, educated at a *lycée*, devoted to sport, intellectual, and even anarchist. In short, an excellent young woman, whose head has been completely turned by reading magazines and feminist novels.

Every possible kind of snobbishness she cultivates diligently, even that of perversity. If virtue were ever to become fashionable, then Colette would sit by the fire and spin and nurse her children. For the time being

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## MADEMOISELLE SNOBINETTE

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she writes love sonnets, which are vapid and unpleasant, and disguises herself as a sultana at the sub-prefect's soirées. If Lucie Delarue-Mardrus wore a ring in her nose, Colette would wear two and be convinced that in genius, beauty, and original audacity she had surpassed the famous poetess. Such is my little cousin, the pride and scandal of Roc-sur-Cère, very nice, rather absurd, and not the least little bit vicious.

She was quite ready to adopt the idea of living in an old house, but she declared :

“I must have real Louis XVI furniture. We will visit the bric-à-brac shops. It will be very amusing.”

“The bric-à-brac shops! Why, they get their things from Roc-sur-Cère!”

That's why our peasants are so exacting. Any fragment of old iron or piece of worm-eaten wood appears to them a veritable gem. For two hundred francs I was offered a miserable chest in imitation Boule, pure Napoleon III. And the cobbler who treasured it in his back shop

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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assured me that it dated from our early monarchy and the days of Joan of Arc.

Before making a round of the old furniture shops I suggested to Colette that we might go and see the modern things in the Autumn Salon. She seemed perplexed for a moment. . . . What if by any chance the antique were to go out of fashion? What if modernity were to take its revenge? Colette, having read in the newspapers that the Autumn Salon is the of horror *la bourgeoisie*, was quite prepared to be enchanted.

We went together to the Grand Palais. What we saw there I dare not describe. Colette was a trifle disconcerted. She didn't flinch before the *Cubistes*, but I saw her vainly struggling with a feeling of disappointment, of irritation, and of resentment. I thought she was going to utter those classic words:

"I can't stand people who snap their fingers at me! . . ."

But no, as yet Colette was not quite

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## MADEMOISELLE SNOBINETTE

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sure that she was mystified. She didn't want me to class her with those who don't understand. She merely said.

"Madeleine, you saw those women."

"What women?"

"Those nude women in the pictures and the statues. Are there really many like that, so squat, so cowl-like, and so utterly without figure?"

"Certainly there are. We know some, but happily we only see them clothed."

Colette meditated.

"If artists choose them for models, then they must be beautiful in some way . . . Just think, Madeleine, in the whole salon there is not one feminine form which corresponds to our ideal of beauty. . . ."

She looked down caressingly at her own pretty figure, her well-formed bust, her fine waist, and all her graceful little body, which modern garments cover without concealing. And she thought:

"I am not like those horrible Furies. I have nothing in common with those women

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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who decompose in a violet light, rot on the crude grass of a landscape like a madman's dream, or rise on pedestals with flesh as woolly as if they were an advertisement of tires for motor-cars. I am no Venus Anadyomène, but I am a harmonious creature, a lithe, plump little Frenchwoman, with the kind of slimness Fragonard would have loved, and my beauty realises exactly the French and classic ideal expressed in those words: 'Not too much of anything.'

"Nevertheless, since these new great artists, the futurist geniuses scorn the delicate lithe beauty of which I was so proud, perhaps it is I who am wrong, perhaps it is I who outrage the new æsthetics, perhaps it is I who am ugly—and after all, as I pass, these horrible bloated wenches may be grinning at me from their frames and their pedestals. . . . 'Hah, hah!' they jeer, 'away with the pretty woman, down with the pretty woman!' And I feel humbled. In spite of myself I grow

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## MADEMOISELLE SNOBINETTE

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reactionary and even *bourgeoise*, ready to admire Cabanel and Bouguereau. Those much reviled painters did homage to the feminine form in pretty madrigals. Their goddesses in pink and blue were as sickening to me as vapid flattery. But here, by caricaturing women, painters grossly insult the whole sex.

“Here are corpulent females embodying the type of Gargamelle, big-breasted hairy monsters who delight us when Abel Faive draws them with mischievous good humour; here are the witches of Jean Veber, the viragos of Lèandre. . . . But Abel Faive can also paint the sweet face of a young girl. Jean Vaber can create airy delightful figures, fairies and princesses lost in the woods. Léandre can reproduce the soft roundness of cheek or bust. When such artists paint ugliness their object is to avenge offended beauty. . . . But the artists whose one serious delight is to reproduce hideous shapes lose their sensibility and the power to be

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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moved by true beauty and harmony of form."

Then I asked: "Aren't you rather disappointed, little cousin?"

Colette blushed and replied. "I? . . . Not in the least. I don't understand everything. But I try to understand. And I think these efforts are very interesting. . . . Yes, very interesting. . . . You needn't think that because I have just come from the provinces I am still an admirer of Ary Scheffer and Paul Delaroche. I love audacity and novelty. . . ."

"Come, see the furniture, Colette! We will look at Maurice Dufrene's white room, and Jaulme's country salon and his ravishing green kitchen. We mustn't miss the Rambouillet pictures and the scenery for the Théâtre d'Art. These are restful to the eye. Of them you may say, 'How charming!' And I may agree with you in all sincerity, Mademoiselle Snobinette."



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## THE ANTIQUE

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### CHAPTER XIII

#### THE ANTIQUE

**R**EALLY, Colette is taking advantage of my kindness. The whole morning we spent in visiting dealers in antiques, the whole afternoon in curiosity shops of every description. We began with those fine houses on the quays where the learned and artistic dealers are archæologists and look like candidates for the Academy of Inscriptions. And we ended with bric-à-brac shops at Plaisance, black, malodorous holes, inhabited by disagreeable, dirty Auvergnats or by filthy, wheedling Polish Jews. We returned with empty purses, in a taxi piled with packages. Colette had a big chalky mark on her seal-skin coat and I a cobweb in my hat. . .  
What a delightful day!

But I really mean it: what a delightful

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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day! In spite of the chalk and the cobweb, in spite of the trickery of the dealers; I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I experienced once again the excitement I love, the excitement of searching and finding, which is the devouring passion of every collector. With me it is not a devouring passion, but I enjoy it as one does some venial sin. It is a sin all the same. . . What money we spent over those old world treasures! Yet my mania for the antique will never be my perdition. For the good God who made the world a collection of marvels, a divine museum of every kind of breathing thing, could not refuse admission into Paradise to Cousin Pons, the Brothers Dutuit, and M. Lacaze. I shall rely upon the intercession of those good folk, saints and martyrs to the antique, innocent souls who doubtless now spend their time in guarding such celestial and legendary relics as Jacob's ladder and the Ark of the Covenant.

I have a special affection for those old

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## THE ANTIQUE

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provincial dealers, who are so fond of their own treasures that they refuse to sell them, and keep them greedily for their personal satisfaction alone. I love those curious creatures, who, when one dares to contradict them, indulge in eloquent abuse and who display their old silks with caressing fingers as if they were some phantom mistress. Their price is always high but their wares always reliable. They would not disgrace their house by receiving anything not genuine. They would not demean themselves to take in a stupid customer with some obvious imitation. These are the true, the uncompromising dealers, and they are growing scarce.

On the other hand, the type of bluffing dealer, of cunning charlatan abounds.

How sly he is! What stratagems he invents! Does he want a Louis XVI chest of drawers in rosewood marqueterie? . . . Then he will unblushingly take a bran-new beechwood chest, soiled on purpose, and cover it with the remains of five or six pieces

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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of marqueterie. Does he want an antique toilet-table? Then he will take one which is really old, somewhat plebeian in style perhaps, but genuinely worm-eaten, and he will cover the oak or cherry-wood with a mosaic of modern rosewood which he has first steeped in some aniline dye. As soon as the sunlight touches it, it will turn a crude, winy colour. Yet those imitations will be sold as perfectly genuine.

One must also beware of leather which is too shiny, of bronze which is too much gilded, of pewter too tin-like, and of wood obviously and ostentatiously old. Oh! those Louis XIII arm-chairs with their damask in shreds and only held together by nails! What snares! What pitfalls! And those English engravings, recent plates which are coarse and soft, on fine old paper! And those portraits, pastels especially—those pale faces of powdered young women who were once young men! Some unscrupulous restorer has effaced the budding moustache or the shadow on

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## THE ANTIQUE

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the shaven chin, has modified the hair and the dress, and, lo! Cherubin is transformed into Suzanne, Des Grieux into Manon, because the modern customer wants women's portraits, and has no use for the portraits of men.

There are rooms on which large sums have been spent and which contain nothing that is genuine.

But why should the copy so rarely be as beautiful as the model? Because it is seldom faithful. Eighteenth-century workers knew of methods which ours do not practise. They never used nails for their furniture, but bolts and sometimes screws. All so-called old furniture with nails is a fraud. Now, to make furniture with bolts is difficult and costly. And the price which it would be necessary to ask for it would discourage the buyer, who wants a marqueterie chest of drawers for six pounds.

Moreover, those who copy the old models have a mania for exaggeration and

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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they have lost the true traditions of their trade. They forget that a piece of furniture is a work of art, which depends on its proportions for its beauty. The modern workman who wants to reproduce a Louis XV chair will exaggerate all its points and make it more Louis XV than the original. He will accentuate the curves of its legs and arms. He will introduce three mouldings instead of one, and for the two flowers of the original he will substitute a whole nosegay. He will make the thin legs still thinner; and he will transform the elegant grace of the original into sumptuousness or meagreness. But after that, he may steep his wood, he may bore tiny holes in it, he may plane down its reliefs with emery paper, he may perhaps deceive Colette; he will find it more difficult to deceive me.

And to-day it was my passion for the genuine that made me turn the chairs upside down, and move the tables about and feel the antique brocades and the old Jouys,

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## THE ANTIQUE

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and swallow so much dust and so many microbes. One dealer almost insulted me. Another said: "So you are a connoisseur, little mother!" And those words gave me more pleasure than any compliment ever paid me by a man of the world.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER XIV

#### WOMEN AT SALES

**C**OLETTE gives me a few days' respite from furniture shops. She has suddenly discovered that she has nothing to wear—at least nothing fit for Paris. The season for paying calls is near.

Our Snobinette has made up her mind to annex my visiting-list. And in order to do me credit, she says she will renounce all her provincial costumes *en bloc*. When I urge her to be economical, she replies:

“Don't worry, Madeleine! I am not thinking of dressing à la Rue de la Paix. I know only too well that my husband is not rich. . . . My follies will be moderate, there will be limits to my extravagance. You are a Parisian. You must know all kinds of dodges. . . . I mean ways of doing much



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## WOMEN AT SALES

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with little and something with nothing at all. You know where and when and how a clever person buys costly things at a moderate price. . . .”

I protested that I was not that clever person, and that I was far too busy to waste long hours over researches and devices of that kind. But Colette, with flashing eyes, entreated me to take her to the Bonheur des Dames, which was advertising a stock-taking sale at which there would be wonderful bargains.

So we went to the Bonheur des Dames. The doors were besieged by a feminine crowd over which waved trembling aigrettes and shaking plumes. Every woman, making free use of her elbows, was endeavouring to push her way to the front. A frail lady in velvet was being almost crushed to death by a stout concierge with a basket. Invisible children, stifled beneath their elders' petticoats, revealed their presence by plaintive cries. Carried away with the stream, we were borne inside the shop. There an

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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atmosphere thick with dust deadened the gay medley of stuffs displayed round the central gallery. The purchasers swarmed round the counters like flies on a lump of sugar. They snatched at remnants, threw them down, crumpled ribbons and muslins, and with pointed elbows, shrill voices, and sharp withering glances, seemed as bristling as porcupines. One heard nothing but *madame* uttered in that angry tone which transforms *aa* into *ai—médème!*

“Sorry, *médème!*”

“Don’t push, *médème.*”

“I was here first.”

“You need not on that account tread on every one’s toes, *médème!*”

“Wherever does that creature come from?”

“*Médème*, you are hurting my child!”

“When one has children to take care of, one should not take them shopping.”

“I shall tell my husband it costs two and fivepence halfpenny. He will believe it. Poor man! How should he know better?”

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## WOMEN AT SALES

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"I am going. George is waiting for me."

"Shopping's only an *alibi*, my dear."

"Take care what you're doing, *médème*. . . . You're tearing my frock with your umbrella handle and your hat-pin has nearly blinded me."

"This way, ladies, this way to the desk," shouts a good-looking salesman, who, under the Napoleonic *surveillance* of a shop-walker, is conducting a procession of customers.

What a field-day for kleptomaniacs!

While the devil has nothing to lose from such occasions, the shopkeeper reaps great gain. Among those who are feverishly turning over scarves and laces in a caressing manner which no husband or lover will ever know, there are many weak minds and corrupt souls. Some are completely carried away. Others compromise and say: "Send it. I will pay on delivery." And then at home, alone in their own room with locked door and in front of their cheval-glass, they enjoy the secret, sensuous

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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pleasure of possessing forbidden finery for an hour. They will not buy the coat and skirt, the fur or the fan, but they will have possessed it and robbed it of its freshness. And the boldest, regardless of the prohibition on the ticket, will wear some garment one evening at a theatre and return it unblushingly on the morrow. A first step thus taken on the downward road will be followed by others and by worse. Yesterday, at dinner, one of my neighbours told me that among letters from women accepting assignations a large proportion are dated from the writing-rooms of large shops. . . . It is the end of the season and the end of virtue: everything saleable is being turned into money.

I tore Colette away from these dangers. It was delightful to breathe the air of the street, that purple five-o'clock atmosphere gleaming with opal rays from the electric lamps. I watched the women passing. Almost all looked charming sheathed in plush or fur, wearing fur caps, and adorned

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## WOMEN AT SALES

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with the skins of beasts with hanging claws. In such an equipment, suggestive of ladies in the stone age, our pretty Parisian dolls do not look the least barbaric or ferocious. Beneath ermine caps fair young faces appear angelic, and, when she wears a skunk toque, a brunette's eyes are as languishing as a sultana's. By means of contrast this savage attire only accentuates the excessive femininity of women of to-day. Sweet, laughing faces, grave and pensive or conventional faces, some eager for a passing glance, some politely indifferent! You reveal nothing of the soul. You are mere state masks placed on the inner life like scenery on an empty stage. You inevitably suggest the hypocrite, the monotonously amiable person. You are but a façade intended to amuse, reassure, and arrest a rival's interest or a lover's anxiety. You are so perfectly correct that you appear natural, entirely in keeping with all the artificiality around you; and how shocking it would be if some day a thrill of genuine

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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emotion were to crack your enamel and expose your soul!

Only just now I saw faces which were truly feminine, modelled by nature and expressive of brute, primitive instinct: women of twenty with faces more delicate than a white rose, yet convulsed with anger and covetousness. I saw soft, maternal faces grow as hard as the countenances of Agrippina or Athaliah! I caught glances as sharp as knives, as black as streets of ill-fame at midnight, as grey and shifting as a stormy sky. Grins of anger and smiles which looked as if they would like to bite revealed the bird of prey, the little wild beast which, though lulled, is never tamed, and crouches ready to spring, in the heart of the most attractive civilisation.

Yes, a piece of finery, like a lover, calls into play the instinct of rivalry and of possession. And this is the instinct which impels women to push their neighbours aside and, pressing to the front, to cry: "This is mine."

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## WOMEN AT SALES

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Desire must be gratified, victory won, possession achieved ere the little wild beast will return to its lair. Only then will woman once again put on the mask of amiability as she puts on her veil, and go away satisfied.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Mrs. S. S. Wood  
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### CHAPTER XV

#### BEAUTY SECRETS

“**O**H!” said Madame Robin, “you are reading that?”

She pointed with horror to a magazine lying open on the drawing-room table. . . .

What does she mean? There’s no harm in the magazine. It’s quite innocent and trivial. I don’t go to it for food for my intellect, but for amusement for my eyes and portraits of famous friends, which are curiously unlike. What possesses Madame Robin? . . . Ah! yes, I forgot. She is a superior woman; that is to say, a bore, a woman who reads Kant, Hegel, and Stuart Mill in the original. The knowledge she has painfully acquired and never assimilated has given her a swelled head. Madame Robin, I grieve to confess it, is a blue-



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## BEAUTY SECRETS

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stocking ; that is, a generation behind the times, for to-day blue-stockings are very old fashioned.

This grave lady takes up the magazine and turns over a few pages. They are devoted to advertisements, and the advertisements exclusively to the secrets, tricks, and artifices which profess to postpone old age, to correct ugliness, and to enhance beauty.

There are prescriptions for every case, for every age, and for every part of the body. Some claim to have an oriental and mysterious origin : *Lait des Bramhes, Rosée du Harem, Poudre des Bayadères*. Others date from Isabel of Bavaria or Diana of Poitiers. All assert that they have been approved by the highest medical authorities, thus reassuring timid customers and compromising no one.

The alluring text is enforced by convincing pictures. . . . Women display an enormous oceanic wealth of hair in honour of the Capillus hair-restorer. Others, beneath a pile of faultless coils, look like

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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savage queens crowned with snails. One unhappy creature, as bald as a bat, looks longingly at a wig with an invisible fastening. Another poor thing tries to strengthen her nose by compressing it into a case which works with a spring. Another angelic being, with her electric chin-prop and her *bandeau auto masseur*, looks like a nun in a trance. A young mother displaying a faultless bust maintains that she has nursed five children without spoiling her figure.

Madame Robin does not understand such things. Perhaps she wonders why there are so many grey-haired or bald people in the world, so many angular forms, so much embonpoint, so many hooked or snub noses, so many complexions disfigured by redness or wrinkles. Since money may procure youth and beauty, why are any rich women old and ugly?

But Madame Robin does not dwell on this problem. The blue-stocking inquires scornfully whether I need all those things. I deny it indignantly.

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## BEAUTY SECRETS

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“What do you mean, Madame Robin?” I ask. And rather hypocritically I add: “I am a widow. There is no reason why I should make myself attractive. But perhaps a married woman desirous to keep her good looks might be pardoned for aiding or correcting nature. . . . Men think so much of certain physical attractions. . . .”

“After five years of married life,” said Madame Robin, “it is all the same whether a woman be plain or beautiful. . . . Her husband has ceased to look at her, while her intellectual and moral qualities . . .”

With the air of one who knows, Madame Robin continues to lecture and dogmatise; and I take a mischievous pleasure in recalling how one evening I met Monsieur Robin with a little woman who was wearing a wonderful hat and whose hair was dyed.

If I were your intimate friend, Madame Robin, I should say to you: “By all means honour and respect intellectual and moral qualities. They are a woman’s most precious gift. Yet she has other gifts which

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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she ought not to neglect. I prefer a beautiful soul to a beautiful nose, but I prefer a beautiful nose to a snub nose, and I, Madame Robin, who am not beautiful, take care to avoid that strange mania for decrying beauty. . . .

“Beauty is valuable in itself. To the eyes of Cupid, the most unjust of all the gods, it appeals more than genius or virtue . . . Helen’s virtue was not her strong point. Yet she appeals to us more than Andromache or Penelope? And why was Madame de Staël, with her genius, her tall figure, and her masculine features, jealous of the divine and inscrutable little Récamier?

“Therefore, one should not be hard on the poor women whose credulous coquetry is beguiled by the artifices and snares of shopkeepers. One can feel nothing but pity for ladies who endure torture in the cause of slimness, who risk neuralgia and eczema for the sake of their complexions, who compress their noses to make them

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## BEAUTY SECRETS

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Greek, who enamel and powder their faces, labouring under the wonderful delusion that it looks perfectly natural.

“ We will not imitate them. We will beware of their absurdities ; but we will not go to the opposite extreme. You, Madame Robin, you wash your face with soap, you let the wind chap your lips, you scorn to polish your nails, you wear badly made corsets and thick soled boots, not because you are miserly or economical, but through sheer indifference. You are wrong. Monsieur Robin is like any other man : he admires soft cheeks and lips, fragrant skin, pretty hands, and all other feminine attractions. And what he does not find at home and in you he seeks elsewhere. . . .

“ A certain degree of feminine vanity is quite right and quite necessary. A husband does not embrace his wife for the love of Greek. You know Greek ? Monsieur Robin pays his addresses to the little scented, golden-haired girl whose only language is the slang of Montmartre.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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“Be learned if you like, but try to be attractive, even if you have to employ some innocent artifice. You need not endeavour to resemble Venus Area. No artifice will ever make your nose Greek. But even if this feature be irregular it need not be repulsive. Why should one neglect one’s hair or one’s complexion any more than a sore throat or a defective digestion?”

“Remember the profound truth behind Madame de Girardin’s paradox: ‘Any woman is a fool who remains unattractive after thirty.’”

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## FRIENDSHIP AMONG WOMEN

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### CHAPTER XVI

#### FRIENDSHIP AMONG WOMEN

**T**HEY are gone. . . . The disordered tea-table, the empty plates, the chairs in groups or scattered here and there, according to the exigencies of conversation, show that my callers were numerous. A mingling of scents, suggestive of all the most fashionable perfumes, fills the heated atmosphere of the drawing-room. It is an odour of white rose and violet, of fur and amber, of violets fading upon the breast, of the vanilla flavouring of cakes and the delicate aroma of tea. The lamps in yellow shades cast a subdued light and the dying fire is nothing but a glowing coal set in silvered ashes. I am rather worn out by my task of sustaining and reanimating conversation, constantly interrupted by arrivals and departures.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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For these receptions from five till seven are among the most tiring of all social duties. And I stretch myself on my couch, with my elbow pillowed in a cushion. Henri Delannoy looks at me affectionately and asks:

“You are worn out? Completely exhausted?”

“Yes.”

“Then I will go.”

“No, stay. I can treat you like an old friend. With you I can be silent . . . deliciously silent! . . . Tell me tales.”

“Do you want gossip? You have had nothing else for two hours. As I listened to those ladies I was reminded, except for the costume, of characters in *revues*. Everyone put in her word, told her tale, made her speech on the scandal of the day, the book of the day, the man or the woman of the day.”

“And I was chief of the gossips.”

“I should not have ventured to say so.”

“No! you are too polite. . . . And you were the public? . . .”



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## FRIENDSHIP AMONG WOMEN

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"I was entertained. But I was silently commenting on the play."

"Now you may do it aloud."

He smiled, and in his quaint Valois face, with pointed moustache and fine beard, his grey-blue eyes sparkled.

"I was thinking, as I listened to those charming persons gathered round you, that among all human sentiments the rarest is the sincere friendship of one woman for another."

"Oh!"

"Those ladies discussed their women friends with that frank disloyalty, that bitter compassion, that extraordinary failure to recognise the moral obligations of friendship which is only to be found among members of your sex—you yourself, of course, excepted. . . . Do you remember those scraps of conversation? 'Valentine is very pretty. And she looks so young!' 'Doesn't she? She is really wonderful. . . . You would never believe that she is . . . thirty-nine.'" 'No, my dear: forty-three!'

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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‘Impossible!’ ‘She confesses to thirty-nine.’ ‘Thirty-nine is not an age at all. It is a plateau where one takes a long rest before beginning to go down the wrong side of life. There are some women who stay there for ever. Valentine will still be there next year. But I know her age. For we were school friends. That is, she was one of the big girls when I was learning to read. . . . She was my little mother. . . .’ ‘However does that woman contrive to preserve herself so well? She must know some dodge.’ ‘She goes to the beauty schools. Charlotte too is delicious. . . .’ ‘Ah! she is younger; she is on the twenty-nine plateau. . . .’ ‘Charming! But she oughtn’t to dye her hair. However, since she has had her new teeth no man can resist her smile. . . .’ ‘And, Juliette, do you see her still?’ ‘Oh yes, she and I are great friends, I always stand up for her.’ ‘Who attacks her, then?’ ‘Oh! many people. She has a gift for making enemies.’ ‘But aren’t the reports about her morals

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## FRIENDSHIP AMONG WOMEN

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true?' ' She never has more than one lover at a time. And as long as it lasts she is always faithful to him. But men soon tire of her, no one knows why. And she is one of those who can't endure loneliness.' "

Henri Delannoy is an excellent mimic and the tones of some of the speakers he reproduced to the life.

"Frankly," he said, "when a man has listened to some hundreds of such conversations, he may be excused for doubting whether loyalty exists among women."

I was rather hurt, and I was examining my own conscience. Had I myself really been guilty of the same petty falseness, the same complete betrayal and the same facile, almost involuntary disparagement of my friends? I know that others are not without reproach in this matter, but as for me . . .

"Notice," continued Henri Delannoy, "that these women who pick each other to pieces are not intentionally malicious. She who reveals the secret blemishes, failings,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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and weaknesses of Valentine, Charlotte, and Juliette will immediately forget all the harm she has done. And one day when in her turn she learns that Valentine gives her five years more than her age, that Charlotte attributes her fresh complexion to some expensive enamel, that Juliette mocks at her irregularities, then she will be quite astonished, she will shed bitter tears, and she will suffer intensely. Then she will cry: 'But why are they so unkind? I haven't done them any harm. . . . I was their friend! . . .'

"And so the game continues. When a man wishes to depreciate another man, he attacks his intelligence, he calls him a fool or an idiot. But when a woman attacks a woman, she always goes for her face, like a cat. And it is not flattering to your sex, madam. For to most women it never occurs that their rivals may possess other than physical attractions. . ."

"My dear sir, you exaggerate."

"My dear madam, in the very chair in

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## FRIENDSHIP AMONG WOMEN

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which I am sitting, only a few minutes ago, there was an ex-beauty, who is extremely well preserved. And she was talking to your Cousin Colette. . . .”

“Madame La Managée? A blue frock, a black toque with an aigrette?”

“Precisely. . . . She had already devoured several charming women, when the innocent Colette, wishing to rescue from her clutch the fair Jeanne Laurent’s charms, said: ‘She at least is pretty. You must admit that she is . . .’ Madame La Managée observed Jeanne Laurent, who was as fresh and radiant as an apple-tree branch in flower. . . . Her corrosive glance surveyed the pink cheeks, the bright silky hair, the fine violet eyes and all the young girl’s alluring charms; and then, after a short pause, in triumphant tones, she replied: ‘Yes, yes, she is rather pretty. *But she will soon lose her good looks.*’ Now isn’t that a fierce and feminine remark?”

“My friend,” I said, “you horrify me.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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You seem to be right, and yet my heart protests that you are wrong. I have women friends. I love them, and I don't eat them alive. I would not even nibble at them. ...."

"You need not to be alarmed, madame. You are not malicious, only just a trifle sarcastic perhaps, but you are too busy, thank Heaven, to amuse yourself at your neighbours' expense. Besides, I believe you delight in the happiness of others."

"I endeavour to do so. . . . My chosen friends are women who have suffered, who take long, broad views and know how to be charitable. Those dear friends you don't know. They don't come to my afternoons. They prefer unceremonious and intimate talks. They are kind and not in the least jealous. They would soon convince you that friendship may exist among women."

"When a woman has a good man's heart," replied Henri Delannoy.

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## ANGELS' GIFTS

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### CHAPTER XVII

#### ANGELS' GIFTS

**F**RRIENDS who are too rich to amuse themselves alone have invited me to their Christmas supper: four pounds a head and a crowd of snobs and smart folk. I refused their invitation. . . I prefer to spend my Christmas Eve alone with my son and daughter.

For my children, and for them alone, I have ordered a charming dinner. I have decked the table with flowers and put on a thin frock of pale pink, just the soft shade which I know they love. For them only I have lit all the lights on the drawing-room chandeliers. And here we are, so happy to be together, heart to heart, a little family circle, incomplete, alas! but so intimate, so united, and such a strong tower of defence against all the vicissitudes of life.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Annette in white, her soft, fair chestnut hair twisted round her head—very delicate, witty and sarcastic—Annette is at the piano. She is singing :

“Trois anges sont venus ce soir  
M'apporter de bien belles choses,  
L'un d'eux portait un encensoir,  
L'autre avait un bouquet de roses. . . .”\*

Her voice has still the crystal sound, the silvery ring, and all the cold simplicity of childhood. It is a sexless voice, as colourless as the morning dew upon the lilies—a voice which has never sobbed with sorrow or sighed with love, a vestal voice, so truly virginal that it must rise and reach the angels.

“Et le troisième avait en main  
Une robe toute fleurie  
De perles, d'or et de jasmins  
Comme en a madame Marie.”†

Then Jean, lying on the rug at my feet,

\* “Three angels came to-night to bring me beautiful gifts. One bore a censer, another a nosegay of roses.”

† “And the third in her hand bore a beautiful robe flowered with jessamine and with golden beads, like the robe Our Lady wears.”



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## ANGELS' GIFTS

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rises and takes up that refrain of Augusta Holmès, which I used to sing when I was his age. Its graceful lilt still pleases me :

“ Noël ! Noël !  
Nous venons du ciel,  
T'apporter ce que tu désires.”

Dear voices singing in unison ! Last year they harmonised so perfectly ; but for the last few months the boy's voice has been changing, it is becoming hoarse and escaping from his control. Dawning manhood sets the wonderful instrument out of tune ; and the little boy's clear, cold, innocent voice, with its high celestial notes, grows harsh and discordant. Sometimes women keep all their lives their girls' voices, which hardly alter, only becoming perhaps a little lower. But the solemn voice of a man, the voice which will command, and which perhaps will lie, the voice which will say : “ I will ” and “ I love,” the voice which women will adore, that voice begins as early as the sixteenth year. . . . And I think how our sons' childish

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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voices belong alone to us, their mothers, and how we cherish them in our memories, in our secret treasuries, in our reliquaries, where we keep the first golden curls cut from a head which will soon lose its golden hue. And in this thought I take a strange, melancholy delight, mingled with pride, affection, and perhaps jealousy.

My children sing, and their song rocks me as in a cradle, me, their mother, who has so often rocked them in theirs. A pleasant weariness comes over me, and, gazing into the fire, I seem to fall asleep. Indistinct memories emerge from my reverie.

“Trois anges sont venus ce soir.”

Annette and Jean—Annette especially—look for those beautiful angels of youth, bearing mysterious gifts, to which we give the most alluring names: hope, fame, love.

Many a Christmas Eve have little cherubs, laden with playthings, hovered over their beds and entered their dreams. But now these angelic imps have vanished;

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## ANGELS' GIFTS

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and others, grand and awesome, are to appear. . . .

To me they have come bearing gifts which have made my life rich. And once again I see them, all those old Christmastides, passing like sprites through the dazzling lights and shadows of the hearth, or like invisible phantoms riding on waves of music.

The first are like little children ranged in order of size, one behind the other, like the processions of English babies in Christmas picture-books. Their faces are all alike, for between children of three, of four, of five, there are no great differences. They hold dolls with towey hair, variegated balls, hoops, and feathered kites. Their frocks are white and glistening like sugar, their cheeks are jam stained, and on their heads are honey-coloured halos all on one side like little girls' straw hats when they have been running.

They pass and vanish into the chimney's blackness. Others appear. They are be-

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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tween ten and fourteen and look like school-children. Their slim forms have lost their round infantile plumpness. With their long, thin arms and legs they have a comic air. Their fingers are inky and they wear laurel crowns of green paper as if they had just returned from a prize distribution. Their eyes, not so confident as of yore, reflect their sensitive, capricious little souls. Poor little angels! you have reached the awkward age. Come, take your gifts, those terrible *useful* presents, the inventions of parental zeal. Come, take your paint-boxes and your sets of compasses, your pen-cases and your portfolios and your volumes of Czerny's exercises, which an uncle who never liked children has had bound in red and gold.

Now, hail to the charming Christmas-tides of sixteen and seventeen! Angels slender as maidens, laughing or pensive angels, you bear a bunch of lilies for my first ball dress, my sweetheart's first love-letter, and the ring set with one pearl,

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## ANGELS' GIFTS

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given me by my betrothed one Christmas night when the bells were ringing.

And you, Noël's, gay or sad, which mark each year of my declining life, pass by in silence. . . . Not without tears can I regard him who, clothed in eternal mourning, turns his head and then departs with dark wings folded. I have a smile for the angel, who with brave, serious face, bearing upon his breast the frail treasure of a newborn child, says to me: "I return to you that which you have lost. Over your empty cradle you may now hoist the blue pennoned flag of joy."

Pass on, smiling but perturbed angel, the love which knows not itself, bearing wreaths of roses with thorns that tear my heart. Pass on mute angel of forgetfulness, with an hour-glass heavy with ashes. . . .

Now they are all gone. . . . And the angel of this year has not come. Doubtless there are no more Christmases for me. My maturity already shivers in September twilight

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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But from the flickering flame a mysterious being rises. He is taller than the others, and in the pathetic beauty of his veiled face he is like autumn. In his hands he bears a torch burning with a spirit's brightness and a full blown rose with an overpowering scent. I feel impelled to question him : "Who are you. . . . What do you bring? Are you what is called the last love, the greatest of all, the most terrible, demanding of woman the libation of her last tears and seated upon the sealed tomb of her youth? If you are that one, stay not in my house, touch me not. I fear your consuming fire, your deadening perfume. . . ."

Beneath his veil he smiled, and the rose he threw shed its petals upon my knee. . . . I shiver and I awake. . . .

Annette is singing :

"Noël! Noël!  
Nous venons du ciel,  
T'apporter ce que tu désires."

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## WHO BREAKS, PAYS

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### CHAPTER XVIII

#### WHO BREAKS, PAYS

**O**H! Mrs. Pankhurst, estimable lady, and you, Miss Christabel Pankhurst, pride of English Suffragettes, what have you done? I blush for you. Followed by hundreds of shrieking ladies, with stones and hammers concealed in their bags, you went to the house of Mr. Asquith, your old enemy, and you smashed his windows. Then, possessed by holy wrath, you and your acolytes shattered to atoms the windows of banks and shops in the Strand and Regent Street.

A mounted policeman, who had ridden up to see what caused the noise, was surrounded by you, battered, unhorsed and mauled about, as if he were a latter-day Orpheus in the hands of suffragette Mænads.

Then numbers of other policemen

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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hastened up. And their red faces, usually so stolid, now glowed beneath their helmets with indignation and an offended sense of decency! For every Englishman's sense of decency, even a police constable's, is offended when English ladies forget to be decorous. And that was why you, Mrs. Pankhurst, and you, fair Christabel, and two hundred of your friends, were taken away together by no means gently. And now a judge in a white wig, the guardian of tradition, free from all vain sentimentality, sentences you to some months' imprisonment with hard labour. The proverb is quite right: who breaks, pays.

Miss Christabel Pankhurst, I see you once again as you were last year in your office at Clement's Inn. Once again I see that black gloomy house, its hall plastered with notices in huge letters of the weeks' meetings. And all the papers scattered on the table—*Votes for Women*. And the pretty typists in white blouses, violet ties, and green aprons—the three suffragette colours.



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## WHO BREAKS, PAYS

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Violet, white, and green ! These colours were repeated in the needlework exhibited for sale for the benefit of the cause.

You yourself, Miss Christabel, were wearing violet, white, and green. But not for one moment could I doubt your sex, for you are a pretty, fresh, fair girl ; and those suffragette colours become you extremely well ! Your quaint little nose pleased me, and so did your intelligent eyes, which, without a trace of fear, look straight at things, persons, and ideas.

I was told that you are a doctor of laws and qualified to be a barrister—that you possess more diplomas than Mr. Asquith, that, having been arrested after a meeting in Trafalgar Square, you pleaded your cause most eloquently, defying judges and witnesses, among whom were Mr. Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr. Herbert Gladstone.

I expressed some surprise that you should resort to violent methods to advocate a cause which in itself is very just, and to

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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present claims which are relatively moderate. For you only demand the enfranchisement of women who own property and are heads of families. And many reasonable Englishmen would agree with you if only you had not this unfortunate mania for breaking windows.

To these observations, expressed in rather ludicrous Franco-English, you replied :

“ You must take into consideration the different temperaments of various nations. Londoners adore flourishing trumpets, striking colours, and eccentric costumes. They afford a pleasing contrast to the grey gloom of our towns and our skies and to that phlegmatic gravity which all our people affect. Look at the enormous success of the Salvation Army ! And without drum-beating and horse parade, without processions and riots, would our own people and foreign peoples and you O doubting Frenchwoman ! ever have heard of the Suffragettes ? ”

Then Miss Christabel added that in

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## WHO BREAKS, PAYS

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France other methods of propaganda must be adopted. She asked me whether I should have the courage to walk down the Avenue de l'Opéra, dressed in violet, white, and green, wearing an enamelled brooch and a scarf embroidered with the prophetic words: "Votes for Women." To which I replied that I should prefer never to vote.

. . . And Miss Christabel despised me.

The next day I saw her again in the concert-room at Queen's Hall. On the platform, in front of the great organ, had been hung a vast curtain, inscribed with a huge notice; and in front of it sat thirteen ladies, all dressed in white, wearing across their breasts scarves of the three colours, and each bearing a flag on which was inscribed the name of a London district. One represented Battersea, another Clapham, etc. And it was an edifying spectacle! Miss Christabel made a most animated speech. She said all manner of reasonable things, but towards the end she spoilt everything by announcing that if Mr. Asquith

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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persisted in refusing to receive their deputations they would turn him out of office.

And then they related the tortures suffered by imprisoned Suffragettes, who had been treated like thieves and criminals. They told how, in order to be placed among political offenders, they had conducted the hunger strike, and how they had been forcibly fed through the nose or the stomach. A horrible story!

It was then that I understood the suffragette movement to be at once practical and mystical, a political agitation but at the same time a religion. Then I realised that in this feminine army are Polyuctes in petticoats, women sober-minded and fanatical, intoxicated with the idea of martyrdom and prepared to overthrow idols and ministries.

But if at one time English people were interested in the doings of these women, they are now beginning to think that they go too far. And I fear lest Mrs. Pankhurst and her followers may have com-

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## WHO BREAKS, PAYS

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promised a cause which was once sure of victory.

Nevertheless their violence is not utterly without excuse, and among the papers with which they loaded me, I find a document which I will translate, although I cannot reproduce its humorous gravity. It is a letter from Mr. T. D. Benson on the suffragettes and their methods.\*

“TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Labour Leader*,”

“DEAR SIR,

“Having had, through illness, plenty of time on my hands this last week, I have made a calculation of the number of years which the lady suffragettes have put back their movement. I find that it amounts to somewhat about 235 years. The realisation, therefore, of their aims is, according to this mode of chronology, as far off in the future as the Plague and the Fire of London are in the past. Nevertheless, I shall not be surprised if they succeed within the next twelve months, or two or three years at the most.

\* The translator reproduces the original leaflet, No. 46, published by the W.S.P.U.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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“Of course, when men wanted the franchise, they did not behave in the unruly manner of our feminine friends. They were perfectly constitutional in their agitation. In Bristol, I find they only burnt the Mansion House, the Custom House, the Bishop’s Palace, the Excise Office, three prisons, four toll houses, and forty-two private dwellings and warehouses, and all in a perfectly constitutional and respectable manner. Numerous constitutional fires took place in the neighbourhoods of Bedford, Cambridge, Canterbury and Devizes. Four men were respectably hanged at Bristol and three in Nottingham. The Bishop of Lichfield was nearly killed, and the Archbishop of Canterbury was insulted, spat upon, and with great difficulty rescued from amidst the yells and execrations of a violent and angry mob. The suffragists in those days had a constitutional weakness for bishops, and a savage vandalism towards cathedrals and bishops’ palaces. A general strike was proposed, and secret arming and drilling commenced in most of the great Chartist centres. Wales broke out even into active rebellion, and nine men were condemned to death. At London, Bradford, York, Sheffield, Liverpool, Chester, Taunton,

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## WHO BREAKS, PAYS

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Durham, and many other towns, long sentences of penal servitude were passed. In this way the males set a splendid example of constitutional methods in agitating for the franchise. I think we are well qualified to advise the suffragettes to follow our example, to be respectable and peaceful in their methods like we were, and then they will have our sympathy and support."

"Yours,

"T. D. BENSON."

And I conclude that as omelettes cannot be made without the breaking of eggs, neither can revolutions without the breaking of windows. But even if it were opportune, even if it were lawful, the action of the suffragettes must be condemned on the ground that it is unwomanly.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER XIX

#### THE PAST

**L**AST year, my friend, Suzanne de Rouvre, whose charming little pictures are the pride of museums and collections, married François Mérignan. They are an ideal couple—the marriage of artists is always said to be a dangerous experiment; but Suzanne and François may risk it. Free, both of them, from all entanglements, having reached the age when infatuation but not passion is impossible, they found in one another all the delights of friendship and the charms of love. After a quiet wedding they disappeared. A fortnight after their return to Paris, Suzanne came to see me.

“You ought to be thankful,” I said, when she had told me of her happiness. “But perfect felicity always alarms me.



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## THE PAST

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Offer some sacrifice to the jealous gods. When you cross the Seine some evening, lean over the parapet and throw your most beautiful ring into the river."

I was laughing. But Suzanne sighed. In the twilight before the lamps were lit, I could only see the pale fairness of her face between her black hat and dark coat, and resting on the soft sable of her muff a little ungloved hand glittering with jewels.

"There is no need for me to throw into the water one of these rings, which are all precious because François gave them to me. I have my share of grief. I am paying my score. . . . Oh! it's a stupid story, Madeleine; and any one but you would think it absurd. I am jealous. . . ."

"No?" I exclaimed.

Then she made her confession:

"You have heard, Madeleine, how I came to know François, and how our minds were attracted from afar by an irresistible affinity. François, who was always away on his travels, had never seen me, but he had bought

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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several of my pictures, and he adored my manner of surrounding things and creatures with an atmosphere of tender, autumnal melancholy. I had read all his books and I knew his poems by heart. In the lonely life I had chosen I longed to have him for my friend. I divined his tender heart and that caressing grace which is not incompatible with energy. Then I tried to read the life of François between the lines of his books, decomposing and reconstructing them in all kinds of ways, and trying to discover how far personal experience played a part in a work woven of memories and written in the manner of a confession. Thus, by dint of regarding François Mèrignan in the rôle of lover, I was ever discovering some new reason for loving him. By his adorable virtues and even by his failings he was so exactly the man of my heart.

“At length I saw him, and I was not disappointed. In François, character and talent harmonised perfectly. His beautiful

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## THE PAST

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books were like a mirror faithfully reflecting his soul. We became friends, then lovers, then we married. And our happiness so renewed our youth that we were unconscious of our years. In vain the past threw its lengthening shadow over our path. The former loves of François which were the subjects of his books did not distress me, for it was they that had quickened his emotions. Fallen from him, like ripe fruits, they now lived a life of their own and continued to delight his numerous readers. But he himself, by giving expression to them, had ceased to feel their power; for every sentiment, once it finds artistic expression, ceases to exist in the author's heart. And this is Goethe's meaning when he writes: 'Poetry is a birth.'

"François talked to me frankly of his experiences, not conceitedly, but because he wished me to know him in all his phases. By resuscitating our past we converted it into a common possession. I had nothing much to relate, for my austere youth had

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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been passed in the country and in my studio. My loves were tame and unromantic, and their ashes weigh lightly upon me. Through some sentimental prudishness I did not care to recall those innocent adventures. I preferred to evoke the successive pictures of François, as a child, a young man, obscure and poor, and mingling with these pictures were always faint feminine forms which I could recognise through having seen them in my husband's books. But they did not distress me. For I used to say: 'There is only one reality—us and our love. The rest is literature.'

"It is impossible for me to describe our honeymoon, our intimate life, our long passionate festival. . . . François, perhaps, might find adequate words. I cannot. For weeks it seemed like a sweet waking dream.

"Before marriage my chaste affection had been a kind of sublime friendship. During those days and nights it evolved unconsciously into something quite different.

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## THE PAST

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I thought less and less of my husband's books. I isolated him from his art and his fame. He was merely the man with whom I was madly in love. Before our return to Paris we stayed in Provence, in a country-house which François had bought when he wrote 'Juliette aux yeux bleus.' I had forgotten this novel and all the others. François delighted to show me the background of this famous book and to correct his impressions by mine. I forced myself to take a rather tepid interest. One day, on the road from Lavandou to La Croix-de-Cavalaire, he stopped the carriage in front of a lonely inn, among mimosa trees, on the sea-shore.

"'Look!' he said. 'That is where the idea of the book first came to me. Juliette's real name was Julie, and she lived at Toulon. She used to come by the evening train, when her official lover was away. . . We were a pair of children; only forty-five years between us! . . . Ah! what pretty eyes she had, the hussy!'

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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“ He spoke in an aloof tone, as if he were telling of something which had happened to a friend. Why did I turn red? I blushed as if I had been insulted. I grew pale and trembled. I complained of not feeling well. Our conversation was interrupted and we returned home.

“ In the evening, when François was asleep, I found ‘*Juliette aux yeux bleus*’ and turned over its pages. It seemed as if I read it for the first time. What a new significance clothed this commonplace story out of which a great writer had created a masterpiece! Then, one by one, I recalled all the novels, in which like some precious essence contained in immortal crystal, he had concentrated emotions, sensations, which were not inspired by me. I recalled women’s portraits, drawn to the life, with a few intimate touches which made me shudder. . . . And love words, which had not been imagined! . . . And suddenly biography swallowed up literature. And I saw my own faded beauty, my husband’s

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## THE PAST

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grey hair, and between us the impassable abyss of dead years.

“I reflected that to-day François is famous, rich, envied by men, desired by women, and that he belongs to me. With me he passes the glowing summer of his life. . . . But his youth was not mine!

“Other women loved him when he was poor and unknown. I am jealous of those women. Though they no longer live in his heart they live in his books. I am jealous of these corpses, of these phantoms, of that Julie who used to come from Toulon to Cavalaire by the evening train. They had forty-five years between them! Alas!

“Why do I feel this? Why does the past of François, which once made me love him through his books, now fill me with a kind of hatred—with a mad longing to banish it from my husband’s memory? François is more indifferent than I to the things which torture me. I am never the first to speak of them. He still talks to

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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me of them quite naïvely, as before, when there was friendship in my love.

“And I listen, but in silence. For I am too proud to confess my weakness, too considerate to grieve François, too prudent to diminish that confidingness, that comradeship which makes him happy and causes him to say :

“‘How delightful it is to love an intelligent woman, one who can hear and understand everything. . . .’

“Intelligent ! . . . Love, when it attains to a certain degree, ceases to be either intelligent or wise. It becomes the irresistible instinct of possession, which is determined to absorb the whole of the loved one, both in the present and in the future . . . and also in the past. But the past escapes its passionate grasp. Even God has no control over the past. . . .”

Suzanne’s voice broke. I tried to console her with wise words to which she did not listen. Then I was silent, and in the twilight I sat long and watched the weeping of the happy woman.



CHAPTER XX

IN JUSTICE TO MEN

I CALLED on Madame Robin, my learned and exasperating friend, and there I found Colette. What a contrast! The severe, big-boned Madame Robin, with her slight moustache, stiff in her grey frock and alpaca petticoat, and the smart Colette, rustling in brown taffetas and wearing a quaint little toque with an aigrette.

These two beings, who are so different that it is hard to believe they belong to the same species—and who grossly misunderstand one another—this tall, gawky woman and this graceful little bird were actually agreeing. They were both denouncing men!

As far as I know neither Colette nor Madame Robin has any real grievance against the trousered, bearded race. They,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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unlike many unhappy women, have never been seduced, betrayed, deserted or beaten by any son of Adam. Colette and Madame Robin are privileged. And if they decry men, they do so without any selfish interest, without any personal grudge, for nothing, save for the mere pleasure of the thing, just as certain men delight in decrying women. Why do members of the same sex when they meet together want to criticize the opposite sex? Is it a tradition, or a rite as ancient as humanity? Is it bravado, or a kind of sacrifice offered to some secret weakness, or coquetry, or a game? Perhaps it is a little of them all.

Colette was the bitterest. You should have heard her denounce the male's brutality and revolting egoism. Indignation made her pretty green eyes gleam with phosphoretic rays and the aigrette in her pale blue toque shake in every hair. I inquired into the cause of such violent wrath.

"I came by tube," said Colette; "and

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## IN JUSTICE TO MEN

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my compartment was full of men. That is to say, at the most, there were about a dozen women scattered, crushed, concealed among a mass of men of every age and every rank of life. Only three women were seated. The others were standing, exposed to the shaking of the train, to violent shocks when it stopped and to perpetually unpleasant proximities. I myself, who am not big, was stifled between the broad back of a colossus and the obesity of another giant. I felt the point of a bony old man's elbow sticking into my shoulders, while I could see a diminutive young fellow furtively calculating the measure of my waist. Hanging on to the copper bar, I was hurled to and fro, which was very unpleasant, especially as I happen to be wearing some charming new boots with very high heels. At every moment I was knocked against my neighbours, which must have been uncomfortable for the stout gentleman although not so perhaps for the rude young man."

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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I looked at the other women, poor victims of men's lack of chivalry. They looked at me and our glances expressed the same thought :

“ What brutes men are ! ”

And I recollected what my grandmother used to tell of the men of her youth, those *beaux* of the Second Empire, who were no better, no more moral, and no less selfish than men of to-day, but who were possible and even charming because they were well bred. Theirs was that French gallantry which is so like respect that it almost serves instead of it. They would never have passed in front of a woman ; they would never have remained seated when she was standing. While to-day. . . .

“ Men are brutes,” said Madame Robin.

“ Quite true ! ” I said. “ They are not so polite as their grandfathers and perhaps not so well bred. They have lost those exquisite manners, which, as Colette says, were such an excellent imitation of respect. Nevertheless, don't forget that

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## IN JUSTICE TO MEN

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women too have changed during the last forty years, and not always for the better.

“Formerly women used to exact a certain consideration from men, and in order to assert their right to it they exaggerated the differences between the sexes. They avoided any violent exercise which would belie the theory of their physical weakness and free familiar talk which might make a man think he was addressing a comrade. At all times and in all circumstances they remained that artificial but fascinating person, the Lady.

“But now the Lady is old fashioned. Now we are all ‘women.’ She may be virtuous, she may be timorous, but the Parisian *bourgeoise* must now assume, whether she will or no, the gait and the manner of ‘a woman.’ With her short skirt, her tight waistcoat, her exaggerated hat, her daring glance and her bold air, she is now man’s ‘comrade,’ or, better still, his ‘pal.’ One is perfectly at one’s ease with one’s ‘pal,’ and man, who loves to be

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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at his ease, has no scruples in yielding to that egoism which you call 'lack of chivalry.' And if by any chance it should occur to some kind and simple fellow, well trained by an old-fashioned mother, to give up his seat in tram or metro. to a woman, nine times out of ten he is not even thanked.

"Colette, men are what we make them.

"Our selfishness equals theirs. When they are kind and considerate, we take advantage of their good nature and call it weakness. We impose upon them with our chatterings, our childish caprices, our whims, our complacent obstinacy, our cleverly contrived tears. We are not all virtue, and not all grace, Colette. The worth of the two sexes is about equal. Each includes the worst and the best.

"The men who allowed you to stand, Colette, were certainly not chivalrous. But why do you endanger your neighbour's eyes with those two enormous hat-pins?"

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## IN JUSTICE TO MEN

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Colette blushed, and Madame Robin exclaimed bitterly:

“You are very indulgent to men, Madame Mirande. They must have been very kind to you.”

“They have treated me kindly and unkindly, just, doubtless, as I have treated them. . . . And if I were inclined to remember certain old scores . . . But to-day I am resolved not to recollect anything but examples of men's kindness and devotion.”

“Why to-day?”

“Because I have been reading the heart-rending story of the *Titanic*. On board that ship were millionaires and lady's maids; the millionaires died, the maids were saved—yet in power, strength, and social value the men were superior to the maids. They were likely to be of more use to their country than a pretty woman, a frail child, or a poor servant. Yet, despite the promptings of instinct and panic, despite the passionate appeals addressed

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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to them from boats laden with desperate wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters, they were faithful to the ancient Christian standard of honour; they yielded their places and their one chance of safety to women and children, to sacred weakness."

If at the charity bazaar fire there were a few who dishonoured the name of Man, the *Titanic* passengers gave a magnificent example of the possibilities of man's heroism and of heroism in its rarest manifestation, in the passive form of renunciation achieved by the victory of disciplined reason over instinct. It is grand to march straight to the cannon's mouth, it is grander still to stand motionless at one's post, dying slowly and calmly.



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## WOMEN AND THEIR DRESSMAKERS

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### CHAPTER XXI

#### WOMEN AND THEIR DRESSMAKERS

“**H**ERE is my bill,” said my little dressmaker, “here it is, and I beg you a thousand pardons. Now, if it were any other lady, I should not dare. People are so funny. They think you are insulting them when you ask them for the money they owe you. It’s a nuisance to have to ask for it, and it’s dangerous. Nine times out of ten you lose your customer. But one cannot help one’s-self. There is the landlord, he won’t wait ; and then bills: if you can’t meet them, it’s death to your business—isn’t it ? ”

I gaze at this little person. What a Parisian cricket, how black and vivacious, and no higher than that ! . . . How well I know her impudence, her loquacity, her energy, and her ingratiating manners. Far

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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more venturesome than a man, she has founded this dressmaking business without a farthing of capital. She manages it herself, playing the first part and in dark days, often every part, that of mistress, cutter, fitter, saleswoman, skirt hand, bodice hand, apprentice, and errand girl.

When times are good, then she has workwomen. "But the workwomen of to-day, madame, are strikers, whom the Government protects against the unhappy employer, and who at the slightest word or gesture stick their needles into their pin-cushions and make off. Let the mistress execute her orders as best she may. Then the mistress has bad nights. But what does that matter to the Government? It does not exist to protect employers."

And thus, but in broader slang, talks this little bit of a woman, who in the domain of clothes is such a genius that, if fortune favoured her, she might equal Margaine or Paquin. She lacks their customers, but she certainly possesses their

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## WOMEN AND THEIR DRESSMAKERS

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talent. She knows how to symphonise colours, how to obliterate ugly and preserve beautiful lines. Her confections are unequalled.

“As I was saying, one has all manner of troubles with one’s work-people, but even more with one’s customers. . . . Ladies are often very far from reasonable.

“I know one who comes to me and says : ‘Christine, can you make me a new frock out of these two old ones? I have spent all my allowance. I am in debt, and my husband is so mean! I can’t spend a penny on the frock, except for the making, of course.’

“‘Madame,’ I say, ‘send me the things and I will see.’

“She sends them. There are the two frocks, one good but dirty, the other fresh but torn. Then I unpick them both, I send the good, dirty material to the cleaner, the torn lace to be mended by the lace-maker. And, of course, I pay the two bills. Then there is not enough satin. So

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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I must match it, and pay a high price in order to obtain exactly the same shade. Then the lining must be renewed and new mousseline de soie must be bought. . . . I pay for all this, and it makes a very pretty frock, but one which costs almost as much as if it were new. I told the lady so, but she could not understand. . . . Ladies adore these renovations. They think them economical and they astonish their husbands with them. . . . 'You see, my dear, I haven't bought anything new for between the seasons. What a good little wife you have! . . .' Oh dear, oh dear!

"A month later the lady returns. She must have two frocks for a wedding, one low and one high. I provide everything, and also a coat with three scarves and two petticoats. Another month goes by and spring comes. . . . The poor lady feels oppressed in her velvet, which looks shiny, and her furs, which she thinks are worn. She wants to be like the gardens and clothe herself afresh. So I make her a

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## WOMEN AND THEIR DRESSMAKERS

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little frock of navy blue cashmere, another of taffetas shot with gold, and a house-gown of charmeuse. . . . June arrives. And madame orders another frock in embroidered cambric . . . But I, timidly, mention my bill. . . . For you must know, I am no great dressmaker with a large capital. . . . If I make up ladies' own materials, if I am obliging, if I renew old garments, if my prices are as modest as my place of business, it is all because I am not rich and am compelled to live from hand to mouth. Intelligent ladies understand this. But some give themselves such airs. . . .

“Oh! what a scene she makes, this customer!

“‘Very well, very well! Oh, I see, you think you will not be paid! Then, send your bill to-morrow, or Monday, or Wednesday next week; the morning is the best time.’

“Hah! that is because her husband is not at home in the morning. . . . I send

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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the bill, once, twice, three times. The first time madame is out. The second, madame is ill. The third, madame is pleased to bestir herself; and she plants down before my messenger the handsome sum of eighty francs on account for a bill of thirteen hundred and fifty!

“I apply again in July, about quarter-day . . . Madame is at the seaside. . . . In her frocks of taffetas, voile and muslin, which I have made and paid for, she is disporting herself upon the beach. What airs she gives herself at the casino in that renovated lace tunic which is my triumph! And when people congratulate her and ask where she discovered that dream of a frock, madame will reply: ‘It is Doucet’s’ or ‘It is Calbot’s!’ And never, never will she give me the credit for it. She will never give my address. She is ashamed of me because I am ‘a little dressmaker.’

“And it isn’t nice of her, it isn’t kind. By thus refusing to recognise me, she does me harm, the minx! She robs me of my

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## WOMEN AND THEIR DRESSMAKERS

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talent's just reward and of my chance of bettering my business, not to mention the satisfaction of being known and appreciated. I am like a painter who paints a pretty picture and sells it to some one who effaces his signature and replaces it by the name of some famous artist, pleading as an excuse that having bought the picture, he can do what he likes with it!

“ And if only the woman who thus injures me would pay me money, I might forgive her! But how difficult it is to get a penny out of her! She argues, bargains, cuts off five francs here, ten there, pays absurd sums on account, and seasons them with abuse.

“ There are others kinder and less frivolous, but simply negligent, and who forget to pay me. There are others again who can't keep accounts and who never have the money at the right time. They are bad managers. And there is yet another class, who have a mania for buying and ordering, who must have new

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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things, and who have as many infatuations for frocks as for lovers.

“But all alike pay badly. . . And the wealthiest are the worst, because they don't understand the value of money and the worries of an empty cash box. It never occurs to them that I have paid the manufacturer for the materials they wear, and that bills with my signature are passing from hand to hand. It never occurs to them that on the money they owe me I depend for my daily bread, my house and home, and my reputation.

“So, you see, I am not likely to make my fortune. . . . If I had a large business and plenty of capital, I could be bolder and could afford to run risks. I could follow the example of the American dressmaker, of whom I read in the newspaper. He sent in his year's bill to his customers. They amounted to eight thousand five hundred pounds. In the course of six months he received twelve hundred pounds. Then he changed his tactics and sent his bills direct



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## WOMEN AND THEIR DRESSMAKERS

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to the fathers or husbands of his customers, not to their homes, but to their places of business. And in six weeks everything was paid.

“Now, it appears, he refuses to deal with ladies who have no man in the family to be answerable for them. Or, he demands ready money!

“How I’ve been chattering!

“But madame should not have let me run on! I was relieving my mind. I am ashamed of myself. Thank you, madame. Here is the receipt. Now I must be off.”

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER XXII

#### FRIENDSHIP AND JEAN GILBERT

**S**INCE I have ceased to be interested in love—save in the lives of others—since I have definitely assumed the attitude of a widow who has decided to live for herself and her children, I have experienced a delightful peace of mind. My suitors, discouraged, have left me one after the other. A few persistent admirers, who have time to lose, dally around me, vaguely hoping; but as they dare not make their wishes plain, I need not understand. Their attentions surround me with an electric atmosphere. I am haunted by the phantom of passion, which, though tamed and controlled, makes me realise that I am still a woman. In such an atmosphere, like other members of my sex, even the most virtuous, I am perfectly at my ease.

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## FRIENDSHIP AND JEAN GILBERT

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Dare I write what in speech I should never dare to confess? . . . We women are never so annoyed as we pretend when we are not actually desired but vaguely longed for by some discreet admirer. It is only when we fall in love that this kind of admiration becomes troublesome. Then the coquette wraps herself in a modesty hitherto unknown and enters into the realm of passion as she might retreat into a convent.

My early youth was consecrated to love. My later youth and all my remaining days I give to friendship.

One is rather disdainful of friendship when one is very young. It seems too sedate, almost commonplace. One refuses so slight a gift. One hardly listens to so discreet a companion, speaking almost in a whisper and sitting by the hearth like a Cinderella. She tends the fire and trims the lamp, and all these humble attentions seem so natural that one forgets to give her a word of thanks. A wilder, a more

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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heroic god fascinates one, and, when Love is present, he is so dazzling that his little sister in her grey gown is neglected.

But Love vanishes. In tears we stretch out our arms to him and everything seems to grow grey. Then friendship takes us by the hand and says: "Look, I have not left you. My soft lamplight shall dissipate your gloom, my fire shall warm your solitude, and your life shall never be utterly dark."

Dear friendship! Now at length I behold your true face, which once seemed so vague and nameless. Never again shall I confound you with interest or politeness or capricious curiosity which once disguised themselves under your name. Now I discover that of all sentiments you are the most lasting, the rarest, the noblest, proudest, purest, and also the freest—since you are prompted neither by family bonds nor by the impulse of sense.

Yes, you are rarer than Love itself and nobler, although in a certain phase no less

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## FRIENDSHIP AND JEAN GILBERT

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exacting. To represent you as a placid sentiment would be to depreciate you. For the most long-suffering friendship, once it becomes exclusive may be passionate and even suspicious. It may be wracked with care and die of jealousy: there are tragedies of friendship as well as of love.

Wherefore the charming friend who appeals to a woman when she has ceased to dream of the perfect lover may become as troublesome as he.

Many a time have I thought to have found that friend. At twenty-five I was lavish with the title which I now reserve for a few men whose characters I have tested. To those comrades of my youth I gave my heart's superfluity but not my heart itself. In our mutual affection there was something of bravado—a kind of pleasure in playing with fire, in walking blindfold over difficult ways. Our friendship had the smile, the voice, the perfume of love; dartless and wingless, it was one of Love's shadows.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Down in the depths of memory I gaze on the youths who dared not kiss my cheek but who touched my hand so tenderly. I recall their respectfulness and their perturbation, and the long silences which sometimes fell upon us. They used to lend me the books they liked. I used to play their favourite music. Poets and musicians uttered the thoughts that we were unable to express. . . .

Each in his turn pretended to be my favourite brother; but sooner or later I always perceived what such fraternal bonds were likely to become. . . .

After my husband's death I became enamoured of maternity. My old friends, those who were true, trusty, and loyal, and who had never offered to be my brothers, surrounded me with their affection. There are five or six of them, and to each I give an equal share of my heart.

But the newest comer, that Jean Jacques Gilbert, whom Henri Delannoy introduced to me, justifies the Gospel's words that

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## FRIENDSHIP AND JEAN GILBERT

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he who is last shall be first. Yet in this, Madeleine, grave Madeleine, you need fear no cause for anxiety. Love's season is past. You are thirty-five. Jean Gilbert is still young, but he is no longer a youth. If you could tell him the thoughts of your heart you would say :

“ You are he for whom I was waiting, you alone can I sincerely call ‘my brother’; for you alone have I laid aside a young woman's coquetry. You, like me, have been battered by time. You are rather tired, you are less credulous, yet less hard than those who are younger. You are tender, yet not jealous; loving, yet not passionate. Our souls are near to one another, yet, like trees mingling their foliage, it is only in our highest sentiments that we meet.

“ I have thought of you ever since we met. I am not agitated, but I think of you. I am not ashamed, but I think of you. And I feel that your thought answers mine.

“ Who are you, O my friend? Are you,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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like the lover of one's dreams, like the ideal husband, the creation of woman's untiring hopefulness? Are you love under that last disguise which deceives the ever-ingenuous heart of women entering upon middle age?

"No, no, not that! You are *my* friend, and if I dare not look you in the face, it is through some strange scruple, through some modesty even more delicate than that of love. . . . Help me, my friend. Be the first to say the words for which I wait. And do not be deceived, do not be mistaken. . . . There are other words very like those in my mind, but they are more passionate and you must never utter them—for they would break the charm. . . ."



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## THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

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### CHAPTER XXIII

#### THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

**D**ON'T come on Sunday, dear friend. You would only find my old aunt, Colette's mother-in-law, at home, and my children. I have gone, but without any urgent necessity, without any fixed itinerary or any definite object.

I see you are surprised and almost indignant. . . . "What!" you say, "Madame Mirande, who always seemed so prudent and so affectionately maternal! How can she thus desert her home and children 'without any urgent necessity'?"

You almost think my behaviour improper. But you would never tell me so. And you fortify your disapproval with all the usual objections: "A journey is so fatiguing, and a woman is so easily tired! Who will look after you if you fall ill in a hotel? Besides,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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travelling is dangerous. You may meet with an accident or with too attentive companions or with those masked murderers who come along the footboard and enter the corridors of *trains de luxe* to chloroform some rich American or some *demi-mondaine* returning from Russia! Ah! it is most unwise for a woman to travel alone! And why should you go when nothing urges you to, when you would be so comfortable at home in that yellow drawing-room, where, when the lamps are lighted, Monsieur Jean Gilbert so often comes to talk to you?"

How French you are! How full of ancient prejudice and affectionate concern! How obviously you belong to a sedentary race, a nation of intimate painters, who love to depict interiors, with a subdued light, with flowers shedding their petals on to a marble table, with ruddy golden apples in a dish of delft and a woman sewing at the window. How your imagination is attracted and your art enriched by all these details of familiar secluded life! How

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## THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

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thoroughly you belong to the race of Chardins and of Dutch painters of still-life, Monsieur Jean Gilbert ! You have never experienced that irresistible longing for "the dear abroad" which constrains me to depart and satisfy my craving for novelty by a few feverish or perhaps slowly creeping days.

But just because I am French you think my craving eccentric. The men of my nation cannot believe that a woman who is neither plain nor old can love travel for its own sake. You always imagine that if we leave home it is because we are impelled by some secret romance, and that we must be courting some terrible danger. That is why so few Frenchwomen travel alone, and when by chance one is seen unaccompanied by husband or children all kinds of things are imagined.

And yet we Frenchwomen are quite as well able to be brave, resourceful, practical, and to look after ourselves as our English sisters. The Parisian who travels with fourteen trunks is no real traveller. Her

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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one object is to arrive and to make herself seen instead of seeing people and things.

Once one is accustomed to travelling, it seems easy enough to decipher time-tables, to confront custom-house officers, to contend with the rapacity of hotel-keepers, of cabmen, and of guides; to pack in ten minutes and to jabber in languages of which one has only a smattering or which one does not know at all.

But you are thinking: "Is it nothing to you to leave those you love?" You are reproaching me with being an unnatural mother and an indifferent friend!

My dear Gilbert, I passed my first youth in keeping house and caring for my children. Now Annette and Jean are quite big enough to do without me for a few days. I am not leaving them thoughtlessly or with no one to look after them. Aunt Emily, who, you know, came to Paris from Roc-sur-Cère with her son and daughter-in-law, is delighted to take my place. So I can go on my holiday in peace.

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## THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

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I don't want to die without seeing the countries of my dreams. And I do want to travel while I am still young, before the rheumatiky age, when one is difficult and disagreeable, when one can't eat any kind of food or sleep in any kind of bed or keep one's temper when unforeseen and even unpleasant things happen.

And then I like to relax those ties, dear though they may be, which bind me to beings, places, and habits. I have no wish to break them. At a distance I am still conscious of the loosened hold. They grow dearer. And I look forward to my return which will tighten them once again.

My house is delightful. I adore my children. I love my friends. And yet, if I would love them to perfection, I must sometimes escape from them.

I like the soft sadness of departure, the sense of tragedy which comes over one when the train begins to move or when the boat, loosed from its moorings, begins to roll on the high waves. One is almost

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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regretful. Then suddenly one is carried away by a boisterous joy as invigorating as the wind and the salt smell of the sea, as mad as the swiftness of the train and breathing in the long whistle of the quivering engine, in the piercing shriek of the siren. One is released, one is free. Ah! What a wonderful rejuvenation!

You will say that it is pleasanter to travel with a companion and that one feels younger. . . . Perhaps! But that feeling of freedom when one is alone, you can never guess what a strange, bitter-sweet charm it has for a woman. To cease to be a woman with movements fettered by a protecting family, to depend on oneself alone, to do as one likes with one's time, for a mere whim to be able to upset leisurely formed plans and to observe the human drama in all its most diverse scenes!

The diners in restaurant cars, curious couples sitting at little tables with faces like open books written in a foreign language, which I translate and divine!

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## THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

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Then the people with whom one talks for an hour and whom one will never see again, and who, precisely because one will never see them again, suddenly in one phrase betray all the depths of their heart. And those unknown faces which, ceasing to disguise themselves among strangers, relax and suddenly grow sad and old!

Among these passengers I am a passenger too; and the impression I create is as fleeting as the smoke of the train. Chance sends me companions and takes them away. Charming or surly, all alike I watch disappear and, as far as I am concerned, die. For a moment we are waves surging in unison and then contrary currents absorb us and we are lost in the ocean.

I love the sadness of these perpetual farewells, the pleasure of this constant novelty. And travelling does me good in a way you cannot understand; it effects that moral healing of which now and again I stand in sore need.

But I am not going to amuse you any

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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longer with my confidences. I bid you farewell, my friend, and I will not promise to write to you. . . . A promise is a bond, and I reject bonds, even those which bind a heart without hurting it.

P.S.—I will pin this letter into my book. But I did not send it; for Gilbert called, and I gave up my journey.



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## TASTE AND COLOUR

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### CHAPTER XXIV

#### TASTE AND COLOUR

**L**AST autumn I took a flat for Colette. It was by no means easy to please them all—my cousin, a smart young woman, her mother-in-law, a parsimonious, provincial old lady and her husband, a lazy fellow who cares for nothing but his comforts. Nevertheless, by indulging in a fib or perhaps a mere exaggeration I satisfied all three. It was quite enough to persuade Colette of the approaching revival of early Victorian glorified by a suggestion of Russian ballet for her immediately to renounce Louis XVI with all its whiteness. She installed herself behind Saint-Sulpice, in a flat recalling those in Balzac's novels—spacious rooms, rather low, grey marble mantel-pieces, a little garden with a prim border, over-shadowing towers, the sound

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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of bells ; in a word, all she detested at Roc-sur-Cère she thought charming at Paris.

Dear Aunt Emily was delighted at the idea of keeping her furniture—which is not old enough, alas ! to be considered antique—and Gustave appreciated the convenience of being on the same level as the garden and the courtyard. It was only Colette who regarded the flat from the æsthetic point of view. With early Victorian mahogany furniture, wall-paper uniform in colour, and curtains of white muslin, we arranged an interior which was not exactly pretty but picturesque and quaint. Then it only remained to furnish my dear cousin's own private boudoir.

Colette's own taste would have led her to choose furniture of light wood and draperies of soft delicate shades. But a young person who wishes to be fashionable does not consult her own whims. At the house of one of her friends Colette had met a young painter whose pictures of wild beasts had figured in the Autumn Salon,

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## TASTE AND COLOUR

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and who would have been very talented if he had been less of a genius. A slight flirtation had developed into an ardent friendship. Colette and her animal painter drank deep of philosophy and æsthetics, in spite of the sarcasm of Gustave, who was becoming jealous.

The other day, alone or in company, Colette went to the exhibition of Modern Furniture in the Rue Talleyrand. And, after that visit she felt she could see her boudoir, that she had an inspiration, and that she was capable of arranging something extremely artistic without my advice. I applauded such a resolve which relieved me of responsibility.

This morning I had the honour to be the first admitted to this artistic room. On the threshold Colette detained me for a moment.

“Remember,” she said, assuming the air of a virtuoso, “that my chief concern was my colour scheme. Unhappily I am not rich enough to order furniture, carpets, and hangings from any famous artist. But I

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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have sat at the feet of new decorators, imbibing their ideas; and I have tried by means of readjustment and new colouring to give a touch of modernity to what I already possessed. Above everything I have banished any suggestion of the styles of Louis XV or Louis XVI, all curves and festoons, all soft shades, pale blues and pinks and greys."

So saying, she drew back; and I entered.

Imagine, if you can, the visual materialisation of a highly seasoned salad, into which has been squeezed the juice of several lemons. This was the sight which struck my poor eyes. The walls of the tiny boudoir—three metres by four—are hung with a crude blue cloth on which yellow gherkins glare among wine-coloured foliage. A poor little table once enamelled in pale green has been re-enamelled in wine-colour to match the foliage. A sofa and two arm-chairs in old gold satin and black gimp are loaded with cushions of coarse violet canvas. On the cushions bloom flowers of

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## TASTE AND COLOUR

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yellow, green, and red wool. And on the floor I recognise an old acquaintance, the famous carpet in imitation of moss with camelias worked in variegated wool, the handiwork of industrious Aunt Emily when she was twelve years old.

I was speechless. Suddenly we heard a soft happy sigh behind us. Aunt Emily herself stepped forward, murmuring :

“ My dear child ! How sweet of you ! All that beautiful furniture which I thought never to see again, and of which I was almost ashamed because the young folk made such fun of it ! My 1863 furniture ! And without my knowing anything about it, you have had it all brought here from Roc-sur-Cère ! Ah ! there is my sofa, and here are my cushioned arm-chairs and the carpet worked with my own hands ! But, my dear child, why didn't you tell me what you meant to do ? I should have been only too glad to give you those two barbotine\* lamps with their pretty shades. You

\* Barbotine is a kind of china manufactured in the south of France.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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should have had my globe of raised porcelain, and my curtains of cerise damask, and my two fire-screens embroidered with beads and the motto 'Souvenir d'amitié.'"

"Bead-embroidered fire-screens!" cried Colette. "Thank you, mother, thank you. That is just what I wanted to make my boudoir absolutely modern. . . ."

Colette, Colette! You ingenious little mimic, you naïve little parrot! But how you falsify the melodies you have heard! You must learn to think before you write, and before composing harmonious interiors you must learn to observe. Colette! You went to the Autumn Salon and to the exhibition in the Rue Talleyrand. You adored the Russian and the Munich mode, and, because you are intelligent, you grasped the principle of this modern art which substitutes pronounced colours for the anæmic pallor of an earlier style. You saw royal blue contrasting with yellow and violet, green harmonising with startling red. And you thought: "That's not difficult!"

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## TASTE AND COLOUR

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The form of certain pieces of furniture—how hideous!—reminded you of your mother-in-law's yellow sofa. Neither did you neglect to remark the vogue of wool-work cushions and beaded bags. . . .

The result is here, in this terrible room which you call your boudoir.

Colette, you have depended too much on your own eye-sight. Your eyes are not so sensitive as a painter's and not so educated. You see false, just as others sing false. An artist, a musician may sometimes risk discords. He may take a perverse and delicate delight, the pleasure of a highly civilised man in creating something which may appear ridiculous and even barbarous. . . . An accomplished virtuoso, he knows what he is about.

But you, Colette, your eyes have grown accustomed to delicate harmonies, to the easy combinations of light shades, which, even when they are false, are not strikingly discordant. But royal blue, scarlet, bright yellow, vivid violet are not for you.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Your painter, animal painter though he may be, has a surer eye than you. If he tells you that your boudoir is charming, take care! He is either an impudent liar or an unscrupulous admirer.



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## PIN MONEY

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### CHAPTER XXV

#### PIN MONEY

“WHO is it, Marie?”

“Madame, it is a lady.”

“What lady?”

“I don't know. . . . I didn't ask.”

“But you know perfectly well that I don't receive everyone who happens to call. Last week you showed in four beggars, three touts, and a mad gentleman who was determined to make me subscribe to a spiritualist review.”

My parlour-maid sighs :

“It's so hard to tell who some people are. But this one is not a woman, she's a lady, with a pretty hat and a powdered face. She said: ‘Madame Mirande does not know me, but a friend of mine is a friend of her friend, Madame Robin. . . .’ Then I showed her into the salon. . . . She's

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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not the kind of person to steal the miniatures. . . .”

I grumble as I cross the salon which leads to my little boudoir, where the unknown lady has been left with every opportunity of turning over the pages of my books, examining my treasures or reading any letters I may have left about. And when I meet my visitor I don't look very amiable.

“Madame, I fear that I have been indiscreet, that I intrude.”

I do not deny it.

“But I know Madame Charvet, who is on excellent terms with Madame de Roques, who is Madame Robin's best friend, and Madame Robin is also a friend of yours— isn't she, madame?”

“But, madame, I don't quite see. . . .”

“That this is a reason for my call. . . . I will tell you, madame. . . . But I am very nervous. . . .”

She suddenly seems to realise that her presence surprises and rather vexes me.

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## PIN MONEY

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Her pretty doll's face blushes beneath her toque of shot taffetas. She crosses and uncrosses the ends of her stole.

"I really ought not to have come. . . . But when I woke up this morning a mad idea came to me. . . . I thought . . . There's Madame Mirande! She knows so many people and she is so kind, she won't refuse me her advice."

My parlour-maid is evidently not the only one who is impressed by the wide circle of my acquaintances. This lady evidently imagines that all Paris is dying to be invited to my house, and that the Academy and the Parlement flock to my yellow drawing-room! Such ingenuousness disarms me. Poor little woman! She is pretty and not more than twenty-three. Where does she come from? What does she want? I divine some secret tragedy, some love affair.

"I received you rather against my will, madame, but since you are here I will listen to you patiently. You have been

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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misled. I have not a large circle of acquaintances. I do not associate with the great, neither do I keep cabinet ministers in my pocket."

She smiled serenely. "That does not matter. . . . You know people in every set, while I know no one outside my husband's circle of engineers and commercial persons, who are none of them very rich. My husband is chemist in a large factory at Billancourt. His salary is £400. He is serious and hard working. . . ."

"Now for the romance," I think. "This little woman is sentimental! Tired of living at Billancourt with an unimaginative chemist, she has fallen in love with some ladykiller or poetaster. . . ."

"And, to be candid, you have ceased to love your serious husband? "

She opens her eyes wide and looks indignant.

"Why, I am very fond of Gaston! What can you be thinking of, madame? "

"But then . . ."

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## PIN MONEY

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"Oh! it is very simple. I want to earn money. And I don't know how a woman who is strictly respectable and not stupid may increase her income. I have my *brevet élémentaire*, I speak English a little; I can strum on the piano; I can sing with a thin little voice. I loath teaching and business and book-keeping. Besides, I must consider Gaston, and he is proud. And then I must keep a few hours for myself. So what I should like would be to become secretary to some highly decorous author like René Bazin or M. Henry Bordeaux. I could carry on their correspondence and copy their manuscripts."

"Can you use a type-writer?"

"No, but I could learn if I had some good appointment in prospect."

Then she adds softly:

"I should not ask much . . . eight pounds a month, or perhaps nothing at first."

"Have you children?"

"No."

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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"Debts?"

"Gaston would never permit it."

"Some other vice, perhaps?"

"Not one," she cries, laughing.

"What is your object then?"

"Well, it is this. I don't like asking my husband for pin money and accounting to him for all my petty cash. Gaston approves of our having a common purse but he insists on holding the purse strings. He would never dream of refusing me a sovereign, only I must ask for it. . . . If I covet some trifle or desire some little pleasure I can only provide for the extra expenditure by dipping into the household treasury. . . . And that robs me of every joy and every longing. . . . I might cook the accounts and fake my dressmaker's bills. But both pride and honour forbid me to do that. . . . And this is why, like many another woman, I want to earn money in my spare time."

I took the hands of the serious chemist's wife in mine and said :

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## PIN MONEY

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“Child, you are too naïve for me to scold you, so listen.

“Up and down Paris are hundreds and hundreds of women, better educated and braver than you, ready to accept any honourable and badly paid appointment. They know foreign languages and they can type. They are obliged to work not to provide themselves with luxuries but with daily bread. . . . Dare you compete with them? Would you, in order to procure for yourself some charming trifle or frivolous pleasure, deprive them of the money on which they depend for a livelihood? Could you unblushingly take the place of a true worker, you who are favoured with a husband, a home, and a modest competence; you in whose power it lies to fulfil the natural reasonable destiny of woman?

“My child, in the interest of other women less fortunate than you I must refuse to help you. I could not betray them in order to gratify your whim. Go back to

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Billancourt. Go back to your husband. Look after your home. If need be, make your own frocks, trim your own hats. Save and contrive and copy all those Parisians who are so clever in making much out of little and something out of nothing.

“Go back to Billancourt and be thankful for your good husband the chemist, who would think you mad if he were to hear you now. And may God deliver us from the amateurs who dabble in painting, literature, and even type-writing. Away with the unsalaried secretary, the black-leg journalist who works for nothing, and the novelist who publishes at his own expense. Away with all those who thus spoil business. And you, madame, go back to Billancourt !”



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## A WIFE'S GRIEVANCE

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### CHAPTER XXVI

#### A WIFE'S GRIEVANCE

**I** TOLD Colette about the curious call of the little lady who couldn't do anything, but who wanted to be secretary to a novelist and to earn money to spend, not on her household, but on amusements and frivolities.

Colette raised her delicate eyebrows and assumed that astonished, scandalised air which makes her look like some pretty, suspicious little mouse gazing doubtfully at the alluring bait in a trap.

“Why do you look like that?”

“Oh! Madeleine, how inconsistent you are! How many times have I heard you say that you sympathise with women who work.”

“Women who work for a living or women who work because they have some

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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special talent, not because they want to earn money. But our little lady does not belong to the first category, because her husband provides her with her daily bread and some butter into the bargain; nor to the second, because she is not an artist, she has no fondness for study, she has not the slightest desire to cultivate her mind. All she wants is to replenish her own private purse by taking the place of some poor spinster or of some widow with children to bring up. Such competition is wrong and repulsive. I told my visitor to go back to her home and her husband."

"And yet," said Colette thoughtfully, "it is very nice to have some money of one's own, a sum that one need neither ask nor render an account for. . . . And I, if I dared, would say very much the same as the Billancourt lady, and then you would tell me to go home to my husband."

"Yes, Colette. And Gustave, your excellent husband who works hard to pay

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## A WIFE'S GRIEVANCE

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for your toques and your Liberty gowns, would feel humiliated if he knew you had entertained such an idea. Gustave likes you to owe everything to him—luxuries as well as necessities. He does not object to your employing your leisure in study or in painting hideous water-colours, or composing Papuan music or scraps of verse without rhyme or rhythm. Gustave will always admire you. He will be quite satisfied if you devote a few moments in the day to ordering meals, going through the accounts, and lecturing the servants. By so doing you play your part in the common life by contributing your natural and indispensable collaboration. After all, you can't make me believe that Gustave is mean, or that he is vexed when you ask for more pocket money."

"My poor Madeleine," said Colette with a shrug of her shoulders, "you talk just like a widow."

"Really!"

"You forget that a husband, although he

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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may be in love, remains a husband—a kind of partner, the kind that has the right to examine the books and verify the accounts. . . . Pocket money! Why, Madeleine, I have hardly any. . . . When I gave my husband to understand that it would be convenient and pleasant if I could count upon a small monthly allowance, he replied: ‘Have we not everything in common? Take what you want . . . but don’t forget to put it down. . . .’ That is precisely what I object to. I don’t like to see the trifling sums I spend for my own amusement figuring in the household accounts. Gustave is generous, but he doesn’t really understand women. He has a way of exclaiming: ‘What, you’ve taken another fifty francs. . . You’ve been buying a flowering plant and a bowl of gold-fish! My dear woman, aren’t you absurd? You know you’ll forget to water your plant and to feed your fish. Fry your fish and make a nosegay of the flowers on your plant. And, by-the-by, don’t take so many taxis. The tube exists

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## A WIFE'S GRIEVANCE

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for something besides dogs.' And then he adds: 'But remember, love, you can always do as you like. All that I have said is only for your good and because I know you are reasonable.' After such words, however, I don't care to buy gold fish or cyclamen.

"You needn't tell me. I know I am wrong and Gustave is right. Yet sometimes a woman has a fancy, a childish one perhaps. . . . And mine are always so innocent.

"You call me *snobinette*, but that is only to tease. You must admit that, after all, Gustave is not to be pitied. I am a good and charming wife to him. And I know how to keep house. Our table is good, our furniture well polished, our cupboards full of linen, according to that excellent provincial custom. I keep a tight hand on my cook, who worships me, and on my tradesmen, who tremble at the very sight of me. . . . Yes, Madeleine, I, Colette, abound in domestic and conjugal virtues; only I take care not to flaunt them. My mother-in-law,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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scandalised as she is by my manner of dressing and speaking, cannot refuse me her esteem. And therefore I might be permitted to indulge myself without remorse in the pleasure of purchasing a plant which may die and fish whose delicate health may cause me concern."

"Certainly, if you find it amusing."

"It does amuse me . . . and it does not ruin my husband. There is no deficit in the family budget at the end of the month. But it does annoy and humiliate me to be compelled to say to Gustave: 'I have taken a pound out of the housekeeping money.' He, good man, does not understand this sensitiveness. His ideas of married life are completely *bourgeois* and provincial—everything in common! What is thine is mine, that is, nothing is mine."

"I agree that in this particular case Gustave is in the wrong. He ought to grant you a small allowance which you might spend on those dear superfluities so much dearer to women than necessities."

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## A WIFE'S GRIEVANCE

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“Tell him so, Madeleine. He will listen to you because you speak as an outsider. But I do not dare to. He would either take my words too much to heart or he would think that Paris had corrupted me and that I was behaving like a *demi-mondaine*.”

I will speak to Gustave. His theory that man and wife should possess everything in common is exaggerated. And in Colette's whims and fancies there is something which makes me anxious. It is quite true that Gustave gives his wife no account of what he spends on cigarettes, books, and newspapers. Because he is the breadwinner he feels at liberty not to do so; and he is convinced that he gives everything and receives nothing.

Gustave is mistaken. Colette keeps his house, and with a firmness and method which deserve the highest praise. She is not wasteful. She is not fantastic—save in that which concerns literature and the fine

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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arts. She bears all the petty irritations caused by servants and tradespeople. She is responsible for the burnt meat, for the undarned socks, for the dusty furniture, and for the housemaid's misconduct. With patient ingenuity she must be for ever recreating that comfort and that peace in which Gustave expects to repose every evening. Colette therefore is something more than the petted spoilt wife of Gustave. Her duties represent work, not so hard as her husband's, yet veritable work which gives her a right to dispose of some part of the money which her husband earns.

Will Gustave understand this simple reasoning? I doubt it. He is a husband, a very good and a very affectionate husband, but he would hardly regard himself as such if he were to give the wife who is faithful to him that which he used to give to the mistress who deceived him.



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## WOMEN AND LITERATURE

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### CHAPTER XXVII

#### WOMEN AND LITERATURE

**Y**ESTERDAY evening I was invited to the Mérignans'. Suzanne and François were receiving a few friends informally.

After dinner we sat in François' study. Jacques Villiers, who writes such delightful plays, began to talk literature with Dobret, the critic, and Mérignan. I was glad to listen to them, because they were talking not as they do in society, to ventilate ideas and express themselves wittily, but because they discussed their art freely and sincerely like workmen speaking of a trade which they really like.

After disparaging certain fellow-writers and cursing the rapacity of publishers they fell to confiding to each other in a frankly commercial manner the number of their sales.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Then Dobret exclaimed that the reason why their books sold so badly was to be found in the competition of women.

“ When there were only four or five, who were highly gifted or favoured by fortune, there was nothing to object to. But now that there are three hundred, five hundred, there will be a thousand to-morrow . . . unless we discourage them. So for my part I do discourage them, brutally and unjustly I confess, but I am proud of it.”

I told him he was odious, but Villiers, to my great surprise, declared that Dobret was quite right, and that these Amazons must be done away with.

Suzanne and I protested from a sense of justice and also because we were women. Suzanne mentioned several women more talented and more successful than M. Dobret. And then she declared :

“ What annoys you most is not that women write books, but that they make money by them. For I notice that, no matter whether a writer be a man or a woman, you only

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## WOMEN AND LITERATURE

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praise him as long as he remains poor and unknown. As soon as he sells a thousand copies you begin to find fault with him, and, as his editions increase, so does your hostility. Such an attitude I condemn."

Ignoring Suzanne's contention, Dobret resumed. He protested that there would always be too many writers.

"And there will always be quite enough critics," said Suzanne, growing angry, "especially of your kind, conscientiously unjust and ineffectually malicious."

She appealed to her husband:

"François, you are no fool, tell Dobret that he disgusts you."

"There are excuses for Dobret," replied François. "He is dyspeptic and his relations with women have been unhappy. Between ourselves we may admit that they have not been kind to him. . . . All the same, and without sharing in his violence, I do agree that literature would be well rid of certain misguided creatures who are filled with conceit and devoid of talent."

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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“Here,” he added, taking up a pile of letters from his desk, “among this morning’s correspondence I find three letters from ladies asking for my advice or saying that they are sending me a manuscript !”

“And what do you reply ?”

“Ah ! my dear friend, I never by any chance answer letters, and I never read manuscripts. I husband my time, for it is my fortune, and I defend it mainly against the attacks of these ladies.

“You condemn me for an egoist, Madeleine. But just think : a letter of serious advice preceded by the reading of a manuscript requires as much brain work as an article. And if I were to read the manuscripts sent me by correspondents of both sexes, I should never have time to read books.”

“Yes, indeed !” said Villiers, “folks who wouldn’t have the effrontery to ask a baker for a loaf of bread without paying for it, or a tailor for a waistcoat, expect writers to work and waste their time for

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## WOMEN AND LITERATURE

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them ; and, as François says, their time is their fortune."

"But to return to women," resumed Mérignan, "without in any way sharing the ideas or approving the proceedings of our violent friend, Dobret, I do believe that they labour under serious delusions with regard to what we may call the trade of letters. Because five or six women have attained an alluring eminence, crowds of their sisters aspire to become poetesses or famous novelists. Now they confess frankly that the cause of their ambition is to be found in the tedium of country life, in a lack of pence or in an uninteresting husband. And it never occurs to them that in order to become something more than a mere scribbler, one must possess a real gift, work long, overcome the painful but wholesome disappointments which attend every beginning, conquer ill-will and professional jealousy, and rise superior to misfortune and grinding poverty. . . .

"Without previous training no one would

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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venture to compose an opera or paint some great fresco. It is generally admitted that the painter and the musician must learn the difficult technique of their art. But any young lady who has won a prize for French composition at her boarding-school thinks she can write a novel or compose a play in verse. All I can say is that one renders these ladies a service by telling them to beware. And if I had my correspondents of this morning here, I should say to them: 'Ladies, you want to write; and you send an article to some great newspaper the pages of which are already overweighted with the copy of regular contributors! There is just a chance that your article may be read—in the office of some newspapers, by no means in all—but its chance of being published is one in a hundred. Or you may send your manuscript to a review. The review, like the daily paper, has well-known regular contributors employed to supply copy at regular intervals. There is therefore very little space for

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## WOMEN AND LITERATURE

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occasional writers. And in the editor's drawers are hundreds of manuscripts waiting to be read. Yours may be in five or six years.

“ ‘ Despairing of newspapers and reviews, you take your manuscript to a publisher. He will have it read for you, but he will only publish it if he sees a chance of selling enough volumes to pay his costs. Your name is not known and it will not attract the public. The publisher might risk a loss if he thought you would develop into a genius, or even if he believed you to have talent. . . . But a publisher is a doubting, incredulous creature ! ’

“ Then, ladies, you will say : ‘ But how did this one, and that, and you yourself succeed ? ’ ‘ Ladies, ’ I reply, ‘ we have endured hardship, despair, mortification, all those sorrows which are ever the lot of the penniless beginner. Around us many friends, no less gifted than we, went under. We have arrived. But why ? Simply because we were stronger or more favoured

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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by fortune. Not every soldier is killed in the battle, but many are, and very few ever attain the rank of general.

““Ladies, do not enter the literary profession out of mere vanity or caprice. You can never become a writer unless you have studied or have some special gift. Even with talent you may have much to suffer. But if you lack talent you will never be even a poor artist, you will remain outside the ranks, cutting a pitiful and a rather ridiculous figure. Don't think only of the few who succeed. Remember the thousands who fail. . . .’ That is how I should talk to those ladies.”

“Bah!” replied that brute of a Dobret. “They would only think you were jealous and a woman-hater.”

“Excuse me,” replied François, “I should say precisely the same to men. I may be afraid of scribblers, but of scribblers I have a mortal dread.”



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## CONVALESCENCE

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### CHAPTER XXVIII

#### CONVALESCENCE

**I**NFLUENZA, that scourge of the season, still keeps me in my room.

Where are all my dreams of travel? For a week my horizon has been bounded by the folds of ancient faded silk which curtain my bed, by pale green walls, and beyond, down at the end of the long narrow room, by the whiteness of the window, golden in the morning and growing blue as the hour for lamplight draws near.

I love my room, every trifle in it recalls some landscape or some loved face. If there is any harmony in a number of things collected hap-hazard on my travels, it is not due to any upholsterer or cabinet-maker. I have selected everything myself, costly silk, *bergères*, rosewood bureau, clock in shell-work, and those Spanish mirrors

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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adorned with flowers and cherubs, the beaten gold of which gleams so delightfully over my toilet-table.

Paintings and engravings people my solitude with silent faces. A dark lady, in crimson dress, speaks to me of the old age of the Great King and of the charming childhood of her contemporary, the Duchess of Burgundy. A St. Gabriel painted on copper offers a lily to a little Flemish Madonna. But I would rather have Albrecht Dürer's great woman Archangel, standing disenchanted among the attributes of human knowledge, gazing out at the sky and sea over which rises the lowering sun of melancholy.

I love too that study by Corot representing the Roman campagna and the reddish aqueducts all bathed in a divine light. Every picture, every piece of furniture, suggests a memory or a dream when my glance wanders from the page or my tired hands let fall the book I am reading.

On the little table at my bedside are

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## CONVALESCENCE

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flowers exhaling a faint scent, my faithful lamp, and all those trifles which beguile an invalid's convalescence—scent-bottle, mirror, and powder-box. One rarely uses them, but they are nice to look at—and a woman who is not well loves such childish playthings.

Not but that, if need were, I would forsake such melancholy pleasures, overcome my languor, and shake off my malady. But I have earned these few days' rest and I can enjoy them without remorse, wishing that all my sisters in their suffering were equally fortunate. However modest their room, may they love it and find happiness therein! But at this very hour, how many a poor woman lies in an ill-ventilated garret, icy in winter, sultry in summer, dimly lit by a skylight! Happy those whose glance rests on friendly objects, humble though they be! Chintz and pine-wood, cheap pictures, white curtains, glass vases filled with a twopence halfpenny bunch of jonquils with their green and gold redolent

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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of spring and sunshine—how you can delight the invalid as she lies on her iron bedstead! What a bright veil of solicitous affection you can throw over her agitation and suffering and sleeplessness. Luxury is nothing, for many a poverty-stricken home may possess a charm as irresistible as the charm of a woman who is not beautiful.

Another of the joys of convalescence arises from the visits of friends who bring one into touch with the outer life. Those whom formerly one valued least as being a trifle monotonous and insignificant are now surprised by the cordiality of their welcome. One's gratitude to them for coming, rendering one unusually indulgent, makes them seem less of a bore, simply because quite commonplace conversation may amuse an invalid who is saturated with silence. But if by charity a really witty man or a charming woman will pass an hour by their friend's bedside, they will do her more good than all the medicine imaginable.

Still, if my friends cannot come I can

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## CONVALESCENCE

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replace them, for I have others always at hand ready to appear as soon as my fancy calls them. And, never abandoning me or making me jealous, these friends may answer any summons.

They appear as soon as I open one of my favourite books, which are always close at hand. Then a phantom, but one more alive than any living person, sits down by my side.

The other day it was M. de La Rochefoucauld himself, crippled with rheumatism and wearing an enormous wig and habited in brown velvet. He was just as Madame de La Fayette loved him, very lame, very disillusioned, very embittered and yet very seductive. He wanted to rob me of the belief I still cherish in human goodness, but I soon dismissed him.

And Madame de La Fayette took his place. Her sweet face, lined by suffering, her grey gown, her pale yellow hair, seemed to dissolve into the twilight. She spoke of love and jealousy, of virtue and friendship,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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and her words so delicate and so carefully chosen intensified my natural horror of lyrical extravagance and the high-falutin' style.

Then a beautiful woman came to me, a lady with fresh face and glowing curls, who made my room ring with her laughter, and talked as she alone knew how to write. She told me the latest gossip from Versailles, she described La Montespan's gown of cloth of gold, the moon light fêtes in the forest, the joys and sorrows of maternity, the delight of reading good books. When night fell she was still there, and I was in no hurry for her to depart. One is not eager to leave the Marquise de Sévigné when one has once enjoyed her entrancing company.

Another time I lingered with M. de la Bruyère. He is a friend very near to my heart, not expansive, yet in talking of others he reveals a noble, sad, and perspicacious soul.

And last of all, alarmed at following so

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## CONVALESCENCE

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many great and illustrious people, came a good man in iron grey, wearing a plain wig and bands of plain linen, as simple as a child, as shy as a schoolboy, and bent like a gardener. How often have I met this good soul beneath the poplars of Port Royal, in the now almost obliterated garden walks where the little Racine used to sing. This is M. Fontaine, the humblest of the Solitaires, whose Memoirs, though somewhat incoherent, are so charming in their candour.

Now all this time, away in the direction of the library, was a strange noise, which sounded like a crowd trying to push through closed doors. The good Fontaine who was telling of the innocent quarrels of M. Hamon and M. Lancelot about medicine and gardening, vanished like a shadow in a mist. . . . And then I perceived that all the heroes of modern novels, jealous of those classic shades, had suddenly bestirred themselves. They were clamouring for my attention and my admiration. They were

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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all there, romanticists and realists, disciples of Maeterlinck and of Maurice Barrès. . . . But I feared the sublime extravagance of the one, the outspokenness of the other, the obscure copiousness of these, the laborious dryness of those writers, and I reserved their society for days when my head is clearer and my nerves stronger.



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## A LOST SPRING

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### CHAPTER XXIX

#### A LOST SPRING

“**Y**OU are sad, Madeleine,” said Gilbert. “You have lost someone or something, a friend or a jewel?”

“Neither one nor the other. I have lost a spring, a beautiful spring out of my life. And no one can restore it to me. No very great disaster, you will say. And yet one that is irreparable.”

“You have lost a spring? But where were your eyes and ears? Did you sleep through it like a dormouse?”

“I was ill. Now I am barely convalescent. An attack of influenza confined me to my room all April; and my country-house, my wood and my orchard waited for me in vain. I arrived only yesterday. . . .”

“Well. And you find spring is still here,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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and more beautiful, warmer than the spring of March and April. . . . See, the little velvet leaves are already on the vine, the lime trees are green, so are the beeches. The lilac tree is one big nosegay with a scent overwhelming and absorbing the perfumes of all the other flowers. The violets are still here large, and blue. . . .”

“Yes, but soulless and scentless.”

“And the pear trees, shedding their blossoms, scatter their petals before you to bid you welcome! Why do you complain, Madeleine? Open your shutters, uncover your furniture, waken your sleeping house, and be happy.”

“I understand. You would not think it unreasonable to mourn over some jewel one has lost, some festivity one has missed, or some wonderful play. . . .”

“I have known people cry at missing a Russian ballet.”

“But I have missed a spring in France.”

“That is not so terrible. You are not

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## A LOST SPRING

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old enough to be so miserly of your days. You will see other springs."

"God Himself cannot give me back that one. And can you, a sensible man, believe that any fête devised by poet, painter or musician, that any drama collaborated in by Wagner, Annunzio, and Véronèse could surpass in splendour the birth of spring? It is a drama, richly symbolic, touchingly tragic, a great mystery, played every year by those divine actors, those unknown forces, the powers of earth and heaven."

In February's winter greyness, when the gods of wind and frost seem to numb or wound everything which dares to live, when not a bird sings, not a bud unfolds its gummy sheath of brown, then a flower appears. It is the valiant snowdrop, colourless as if every tint had been washed out of it, so pale that it is not even white, so frail that its slender roots can barely hold the ground. If gathered it fades, for water fails to nourish its sapless stem. But the

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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snowdrop is a herald, it is not meant to last.

When the snowdrop has bloomed, all nature begins to beat with a vague hope. The sap rising in the trees, mysteriously animated with a longing for life, becomes the plant's blood, nourishing leaf and flower. Larvæ enwrapped in white shrouds aspire to a series of metamorphoses. The very stone cracks and dilates. In beasts there stirs a presentiment of the mating season, and men are moved by a vague restlessness and longing. The pulse of the universe throbs.

And then the scene changes. In March, the forests clothe the hills with their wintry colours, iron grey and copper brown. But over the green pastures begins to glow the reddish tint of the willow twigs, and the willow branches are covered with downy things like caterpillars exhaling an odour of honey. No sooner has this curious willow-flower unfolded than the bees awaken and hover round, gladly discover-

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## A LOST SPRING

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ing anew the pollen which they have not seen since the disappearance of the broom in late autumn. For these bees are ancient and venerable. Five months, in the warm obscurity of the hive, they have lived, gathered round their queen. Now they are preparing for their young; and, when their sisters are born, then they will die, worn out with their labours. Not for them is the sight of the queens' future battles, of the nuptial flight, of the gay festival, and of the madly joyous swarming.

They will die. What does it matter? Has not theirs been the unconquerable will and the firm confidence which spring inspires?

Now the bushes begin to grow green. And among the dead leaves, by a perfume as delicate as a sweet thought, one may divine the presence of tiny violets, tightly rolled, and as difficult to discover as the periwinkle and the wood anemone. The thorny twigs of the wild plum tree, more venturesome than the hawthorne, are

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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clothed with white stars. The distant shadows change. Winter's browns and greys are rarefied into an azure mist; refreshed by rain and sunshine the air acquires a new transparency, it seems to become liquid and musical, vibrating with currents of crystalline sound following in the wake of Easter bells.

Nature need no longer be courageous. She grows confident without an effort; she may now bring forth her flowers. In the open air or in galleries underground begin the active, cruel lives of insects. And men and women, who have suffered from believing too readily the promises of past springs, ask: "What does this one bring?"

They go forth alone into the forest. The mystifying cuckoo amuses them. Then suddenly the turtle's hoarse cry announces the presence of a god. . . . Where is he? Who has seen him? Who has pursued him? Oh! to find his horned head, his inscrutable smile, his sly glance,

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## A LOST SPRING

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his goat-like legs ! Oh ! to see him leaping from branch to branch like a squirrel or a woodpecker. He is the satyr of spring, the infant fawn, the wingless cupid. And none shall see him save such as have the eyes, of the woodman, the ears of the poacher and the simple heart of a little maid.

So he passes, invisible, and those who went out alone return in pairs. Now old men may die : children not yet conceived have heard in limbo women calling from the turmoil of spring, the tempest of love.

Such is the annual feast, the birth of spring, the mystic drama which men watch, not understanding. But I understand, I love the lesson of hope, joy, and courage which the wide universe teaches me when it is concentrated in my garden.

As for the Paris spring, he is no satyr nor yet a demi-god, but a laughing imp swaggering in garland of premature leaves, dripping with rain and, when he hasn't any flowers, borrowing them from the spring at Nice.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER XXX

#### A DECLARATION

“**I** AM intruding. You were receiving callers?” said Jean Gilbert naïvely.

His painter’s eyes, which take in everything at a glance, had noticed something unusual in the arrangement of my drawing-room—my arm-chair turned towards the window and another standing apart. Some slight shadow or faint line on my face, which would be invisible to anyone else, tells Gilbert that a recent conversation has agitated me.

Beneath that straight honest glance I grow confused, and stupidly, like some school-girl taken in a fault, I blush, then, for very shame of blushing, I blush again.

Jean Gilbert had been smiling. But now his expression changes. He had merely thought that he had arrived at an awkward



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## A DECLARATION

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moment. Now he suspects. What does he not suspect? And why does this suspicion lurking in the depths of his sad eyes annoy me? I do not owe him my confidence. . . . But before reflecting I have spoken :

“ You ought to have come half an hour earlier, dear friend ! Your presence would have saved me an absurd scene. I have just been compelled to dismiss an importunate lover. . . . Don't ask his name. You have never met. . . ”

“ I am glad,” he said. He looks more cheerful, but with his eyes he continues to question me. He seems relieved from one anxiety, yet the shadow of a care darkens his face which is as mobile as a woman's. And in a slightly artificial tone he says :

“ Ah, Madame Madeleine, my wise friend, you have been flirting, you have touched some poor chap's heart, and now you are laughing at him.”

“ Do you blame me for not having encouraged him ? ”

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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"I don't blame you for anything, dear madam; but sometimes one may encourage a man by not discouraging him. . . . Now grant me the favour of being frank, since we are friends! Don't reply like a woman, but say candidly: 'I have been flirting. . . .'"

"My dear Gilbert, you don't understand. . . ."

"There! Now you are replying like a woman."

I shrug my shoulders, and I feel inclined to tell Gilbert that it is no concern of his since we are friends, nothing but friends. I regret having told him so much. Is he going to sulk or to make a scene? I hate friends who makes scenes. If a lover be troublesome, aggravating, and unreasonable, he is but playing his part. But it is different with a friend.

Yet a friend like this, one whose affectionate respect has never failed me, a friend so near my heart, so brotherly, he surely, through the confidence I have already

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## A DECLARATION

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bestowed on him, has acquired certain rights. . . . And, suddenly, there comes over me a longing to be frank, at my own risk, and to see whether a man can really understand a woman when she tells him the plain truth.

“Gilbert, listen to my story. Then you shall tell me what you think of it.

“It is quite commonplace. A woman who does not desire love and who dreads passion goes forth into life. . . . She does not exult over her lot, but she accepts it; and her days are happy though perhaps not rapturous. . . . Like every other woman, she has an instinct prompting her to show a smiling face, to please and to gladden all around her, and to impress favourably all whom she meets, even those who are nothing to her. . . . That is all, I swear. Do you call that being a flirt or a coquette?”

“Alas! there are those who would, madam.”

“Only fools.”

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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“ Men.”

“ Some men. Here is one, for example, who happens to come into this woman’s life. He is neither handsome, nor ugly, nor rich, nor poor, nor young, nor old, nor particularly gifted, but he is intelligent and cultured, and in his mediocrity there is a certain charm. In short, just such a man as there are dozens of in Paris.”

“ I see him.”

“ He has dined with the lady five or six times, and spoken to her of love in a manner so excessively commonplace as to be above suspicion. In the same manner the lady replied. But, being bored by the monotony of her life, just to wile away the time, she looked with interest into the heart which was so amiably offered to her gaze. Then, having satisfied her curiosity, she looked elsewhere.”

“ Into other hearts ? ”

“ Perhaps. But our gentleman has taken this momentary attitude for a sign of deeper interest. That he should have made an

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## A DECLARATION

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impression on his friend seemed to him quite natural. 'Why not?' he said to himself. I will spare you all the details leading up to his declaration. The lady, who felt it coming, did her best to avoid it. She failed. Then she expressed annoyance which was genuine and surprise which was not. But he persisted. He grew impassioned, angry, ironical, and by dint of uttering the traditional words of love he persuaded himself that he really loved. He seemed hurt, and so he was, doubtless."

"And the lady?"

"Well, the lady looked at him, and she thought what no woman dares to say, but what they are all brutal enough to think, when they do not love: 'Sir, you ask me to love you; in other words, you ask me, in order to please you, to throw prudence and modesty to the winds, to place you before relatives, friends, and even children, to make you my god and to be your priestess and your servant. Sir, don't you think that

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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this resolve to win me, which you betray so ingenuously, may be just a little presumptuous? Who are you? What have you done? Why should I prefer you to another? While you are explaining your claims and your intentions I am noticing your grey hair, your mottled yellow complexion and your gold tooth gleaming at the back of your mouth which is wide open with indignation. It is not my fault if I do not love you. A lover, before making his declaration, ought to be sure that the loved one as well as himself is in a state of grace and of illusion. If that be the case, then even if grotesque he will appear sublime. But I don't love you. I am calm and clear sighted. You bore me.

“Don't bore me too much, or my natural cruelty will awake and I shall long for tooth-ache, or colic, or some other ill to rid me of you. What? You are offended! You assure me that other women have loved you? That is quite possible. But they are nothing to me.

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## A DECLARATION

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You swear that you would make me supremely happy, and that I lose much by not gratifying you. My poor sir, where is your modesty ?'

"That is what women think; and with their thoughts mingle an instinctive fear, a vague loathing and a curious satisfaction, that of the weak creature who sees a being supposed to be strong, become blind, deaf, and stupid. It is a kind of revenge. You are horrified, Gilbert!"

He was listening in amazement, and in his censorious air I could read fear and distrust. I understood that he had ceased to be Gilbert; he was a man, and in me he detested all the women for whose love he had sued in vain. Then I was sorry I had spoken.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER XXXI

IN MEMORY OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

**I** WENT to Ermenonville the other day. The landscape's delicate lines and neutral tints reminded me of Jouy's pictures. The road leading down to the wood, the low houses with their little windows, the château with its high pitched roof and the stiff, imposing park,—how plainly I can see them outlined in red or mauve monochrome. On the damp soil round the pond the trees with light foliage, radiant with beams of light, are always softened by a halo of mist. Intermingled poplars and willows, trembling at the slightest breath of wind or weeping languidly round Rousseau's monument, seem to represent the sensibility of the eighteenth century and the melancholy of the Romanticists.



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## IN MEMORY OF JEAN JACQUES

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It is an artificial scene which at intervals gardeners restore as if it were some old picture. Threatening every spring to overgrow its frame, its lines must be preserved and re-created. It is a literary landscape illustrated by pseudo ruins, with rocks which relate episodes in "La Nouvelle Héloïse," with winds which sigh in phrases and with every flower blooming like a quotation in a speech! It has witnessed the coming of grandiloquent young men, of virtuous and pedantic Jacobins, of emotional women, of venerable philosophers, and even of kings! They were all lovers of nature and of humanity; they all wept tears over Rousseau's monument; they were all sons in the spirit of Jean Jacques.

One day the most fervent of these pilgrims, the members of the convention, came to Ermenonville to honour their god. And they opened the classic sepulchre which the Marquis de Girardin had built for the philosopher in the Island of Poplars. They took all that remained of Jean Jacques

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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and carried it to the crypt of the Panthéon, where those poor bones remain to this day. And there, not under heaven's vault, but under Soufflot's cupola, in uncertain peace, rests the man of nature, the lover of the violet blossom, the night-watcher whom the nightingale enchanted, the ardent botanist who consoled himself for the absence of women by the company of wild flowers.

To-day the descendants of his early disciples desire to celebrate his memory. They have ordered the erection of a monument, they are preparing orations.

The opposition cries: "Down with the philosopher of Geneva;" the Government defends the great man who has become state property. And all this fuss is glory!

I too in my humble way would honour you, Jean Jacques! I will not go to the Panthéon because the crypt is dark and gloomy, full of troops of English and without flowers or nightingales. There are too many stones and they are too heavy. Only your bones are in the Panthéon.

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## IN MEMORY OF JEAN JACQUES

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Your restless soul prefers to haunt in turn the simple garden of Les Charmettes, the Hermitage of Montmorency, and the romantic park of Ermenonville.

In such places I love to evoke your memory.

Seated by the pond, I watched the poplars mounting guard round the empty tomb, framed in the green branches of massive trees. The soft, cloudy, grey sky silvers o'er the surface of the water. A turtle sighs behind the Temple of Philosophy.

These gardens are almost as artificial as Versailles. Everything is wild, but designedly. It is like nature. Yet real nature is near enough to gratify the solitary walker. The park merges into the forest. Often, by moonlight on the pale sands of the Desert, by the Ponds of Châalis, have I met the shade of Gérard de Nerval dreaming of Sylvia and repeating some German ballad. Sadly he went, seductive yet mad, and you, with slower step,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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followed him, slender old man in short brown coat and round wig, bearing the botanist's box at your side. From Ermenonville to Soisy, from Montigny to Senlis, the forest, O poets! belonged to you. There Gérard met the dreams of his childhood, and you those of your later years.

In this park to-day I see you still. You walk with bowed head, looking on the grass or the leafy mould for the white stars of the strawberry plant, for pink cuckoo-flowers, or for those pretty little blossoms, yellow and mauve like orchids, the name of which I do not know. And while torrents of parliamentary eloquence roll in your honour, you, indifferent alike to Barrès and to Viviani, seek ever the violet flower.

The periwinkles of last spring have faded. I wanted to weave a garland of them to twine round your tomb under the poplars. You would have loved my woman's homage. Let wrangling politicians praise or slander, you ignore them, O Misanthrop,

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IN MEMORY OF JEAN JACQUES

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O Disillusioned ! You dream of Madame de Warren's blue eyes and silver voice, of Mademoiselle Galley's laughter, of Madame de Lamage's seductive form, of Zulietta's pink rosettes, of Madame d'Houdetot's enraptured yet sisterly kiss. Poor great man, who was also a great child, glory can never console you for having missed love.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER XXXII

#### MY OLD HOME, FAREWELL!

**M**Y heart is sad. . . .  
I gaze at the carpetless floor, the curtainless windows, the trunks in the hall, and the baskets gaping to receive plate, ornaments, and books. Already the pictures have been taken down from the walls; one by one have been gathered the lustres, beautiful fruits all gleam and crystal; lamps and candelabra have gone; the telephone, thousand tongued beast of wood and steel, has had its arteries cut and has died. . . . What is happening to my home? Former preparations for the usual July departure were never so disturbing and never made me want to cry.

Alas! it is true. I am leaving this flat, which throbs with my life and will always

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## MY OLD HOME, FAREWELL !

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keep something of my soul. But why? . . . I was so happy here. I am so fond of my house, of its monumental door with carved knocker, of its quiet *cour* flanked by two wings of the main building in such good style and united by two Italian terraces. I loved the irregular rooms, full of nooks and corners. Their faults pleased me like the whims of some attractive old man. My flat was not modern. Oh no! But houses are like people: one respects them for their virtue, one loves them for their grace.

And my street, with its strange and poetical name recalling some ancient sign; my street, with its cobbles and its narrow pavements and its fascinating curiosity-shops; my street, whence in the morning rise all the ancient cries of Paris pitched on the traditional notes, the cry of the tinker, of the fishmonger, of the cooper, of the watercress-seller; my dear old street, so loved by me, so unfrequented by the smart set,—I am going to leave you!

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Many years, many happy years have I lived here. The house has not changed, neither has my liking for it, but my children have grown up. They want more room and more comfort. I used craftily to pretend not to understand their grumblings when they complained of this or that inconvenience, and I used to say :

“ But the house is so romantic.”

The children of 1912 prefer comfort to romance. Nevertheless, I entreated them to be patient and I suggested all manner of ingenious contrivances. Sometimes I thought of perfecting the old-fashioned dwelling by adapting it to modern taste. Sometimes the mere idea made me shudder. Then I would dream that some stroke of fortune might put me in possession of a house of my own, built for me by some gifted architect, bold yet tractable like my friend, Adolphe Dervaux. And then from my high windows I looked out on the sober, rather limited setting of my contemplative life, on the *cour* and the terraces



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## MY OLD HOME, FAREWELL !

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and the pure Louis XV façade at the end. The morning sun casts a golden scarf over them, drawing it slowly and gently across until three o'clock. Night's blue moonlight on the old stones awakens phantoms. And when nothing is heard save the distant rumble of carriages and the sigh of Paris falling asleep, a silver twilight fills the *cour*. With beating heart I open my window and go out on to the terrace in the great silence. For me alone night and moonbeams, dream and memory mingle their enchantments. . . .

Behind the panes glisten the vague lights of chandeliers ; a powdered head, a dress with a train, a flash of diamonds pass through the deserted rooms ; a phantom violin quivers ; while in the *cour*, by the light of a pale, heatless fire, phantom lacqueys open the doors of phantom coaches.

How often, on those terraces, have I lived in imagination through Daudet's pretty tale of the Ghosts' Supper at the Hôtel de Nesmond.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Now I am going. . . . I have yielded to the wish of those tyrants who represent progress and futurity. . . . I gave notice. My removal seemed remote, almost improbable.

Then flat hunting began. I proceeded on my own account with the same investigations I had pursued for my cousin. I visited miniature Versailles at a rent of two hundred pounds and imitation Trianons at two hundred and fifty! I returned home worn out, dazzled by the whiteness of the stucco, furious with gruff porters and rapacious landlords. And with delight I came back to my old-fashioned salon, to my terraces, and to my quaint bedroom.

Then, just as I was deciding not to move, I discovered in a decidedly provincial quarter a charming self-contained house—no *cour*, but a little garden and trees overlooking the walls; nooks, passages, cupboards, odd stair-cases, pretty rooms which would be interesting to furnish, and modern comforts joined to an old-world charm.

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## MY OLD HOME, FAREWELL !

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All around are streets utterly provincial. The landlord was incredibly accommodating. I was conquered.

I shall love that house, which is to be my home to-morrow, just as I have loved this one. But house removal is like breaking with an old love.

At the moment of farewell, the being one leaves suddenly becomes precious and dear. Before one can tear them out the old bonds tug at one's heart, and one feels guilty of a kind of ingratitude.

“ Dear house which I am about to leave, why should I not say to you what one would say to a kind host?—I thank you for having sheltered me beneath your roof, where I have spent happy and diligent days; for your door has never opened to admit those sorrowful visitors whom we call grief, death, and sickness. You have surrounded me with beautiful, noble sights. I weep as I cross your threshold for the last time.

“ But to me you will never be strange.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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With loyal faithfulness I shall revisit you.

“Now others will come, who will live where I have lived, who will love you perhaps as much as I have done, but not more. Be kind to them, dear house. Let them find peace and love in you, and may misfortune never enter your door!”

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## A COMPLAINT OF THE RAIN

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### CHAPTER XXXIII

#### A COMPLAINT OF THE RAIN

**I**N the dimness of a shuttered room I awake, and the first sensation which strikes my benumbed consciousness is the little crystalline sound of water trickling over the leaves. After a light knock the door opens. I see a white apron, the breakfast-tray, and then a voice, in the most plaintive minor key, says :

“ Good morning, madam ! It’s raining again to-day.”

My children are already up. They run into my room. But hardly have they kissed me when they begin to groan : “ It’s raining ! . . . We can’t drive in the pony-cart. We can’t play tennis. We can’t bicycle.”

Then the gate creaks on its hinges. The postman, muffled in his cape, brings the

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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letters. The good man is late, but when he is reproached he snorts and replies :

“In weather like this, my occupation isn't so easy, nothing but splashing and slipping knee-deep in mud, and I wracked with rheumatism. . . . Oh! the rain, the rain!”

I open my morning's letters. Picture post-cards from every corner of France express the wailings of my friends. One is in Brittany, where it is raining. Another in Auvergne, where it is raining. Others in Normandy, in Burgundy, in Provence, where it is raining. And all in brief lamentations give their views on this wretched summer.

And I myself, as I think of the long rainy hours slowly shedding their seconds between a sad dawn and a yet sadder eve, exclaim :

“What can I do? I am bored already. . . . It rains! It rains! It rains!”

A light tapping, like the playing of fairy fingers, sounds on the bluish window panes. But, turning to look, at first I see nothing

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## A COMPLAINT OF THE RAIN

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save the dark green of the great massive lime trees, the brighter green of the lawn, the gaily variegated geraniums, the flaming nasturtiums and the lofty larkspurs in every shade of old china, pale pink, faint blue, and faded violet.

There is no one in the chill, damp garden, only the twilight weaving its spider's web over the lowering sky. Who calls me, then?

Again I hear that musical tapping, and, close against the pane, I distinguish a face, which is colourless as glass, liquid as water, a little sylph's face with hair gleaming, bright as silver, falling over an iris coloured robe.

She speaks in a clear but monotonous voice :

" Listen! I am the Rain, queen of melancholy days, spinster of mists and dreams, friend of beautiful soft moss, of green frogs, of toadstools which are brown like earth, red like snails, livid like decaying things, and pale as willow bark.

" Men hate me because I interrupt their

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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work and their pleasure, because I compel them to stay indoors with people they pretend to love and books they pretend to admire or alone with themselves. For days condemned to seclusion, they have leisure to dream, to meditate, to talk, to read, and to be silent. . . . I cut them off from the outer world. I reduce them to their own resources. I constrain them to look within, into their own souls!

“They look, and they find nothing. . . . Where is their soul? It is scattered and wandering outside. . . . They are as empty as the dried poppy which contains nothing but black ashes.

“The vacuity they discover within alarms them. Their own society makes them yawn.

“They look around. The library is full of volumes, but a taste for reading is uncommon, and, in order to please, books must be funny as clowns. Every serious work is an unwelcome friend, whom one esteems but cannot long suffer gladly.

“That is why men dread me. That is



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## A COMPLAINT OF THE RAIN

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why they say of a dull person : ' He bores me like the rain.'

" But you, ungrateful woman, sitting at your fireside, in your pretty drawing-room, what have you to reproach me with ?

" When you awoke this morning, you cursed me. Yet the day has passed swiftly and so lightly that it has not cast a single shadow over your spirit nor furrowed one line upon your brow.

" I have defended your door against the visitors you did not want to see ; but your friends who arrived unexpectedly were rewarded for their courage. They found a warmer house and a warmer welcome than usual.

" The children, who could not go out to play, gathered round you ; and you felt their warm, loving hearts pressed against your own.

" You have answered letters accumulating on your desk for three weeks. You have played that Beethoven sonata which you love above all music, because it is resonant with memories, because in your throbbing

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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heart it awakens the songs and the sorrows of youth.

“You have read old-fashioned poets unknown to the women of to-day. . . . With flashing needle you have fashioned flowers according to your fancy. . . .

“You have tasted the joys of solitude and silence. You have looked into your own heart ; but only the spirits of the fire, the roses in their vases, the smiling portraits on the walls, know that you have wept.

“What day of sunshine would have brought you this occupied leisure, this delicate joy of living at home with yourself, for yourself, yet without weariness and without egoism ?”

The sylph with bright silver hair and iris hued garb was still talking, and her tiny fingers were still playing upon the window pane when my maid brought the lamp and brusquely closed the shutters. And all I heard was the plaintive murmur :

“It rains ! It rains ! It rains !”

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## LOVE AND COLETTE

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### CHAPTER XXXIV

#### LOVE AND COLETTE

**B**EFORE a low fire, the flame of which seemed to die in the sunlight, sat Colette, curled up on a cushion. She had just arrived, between two storms; and her little face was like the sky outside, all shadow and shine; radiant with sunlight, clouded with rain.

I was very surprised to see her. For I thought she was with her husband and mother-in-law at Quercy, a cheap watering-place, chosen because of the expense of removal to Paris.

She explained to me that urgent affairs had compelled her to precede Aunt Emily and Gustave, and that she would be alone at Paris until the end of the week.

She had come to rouse her flat from its

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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summer sleep, to uncover the furniture, to consult upholsterers, to visit a registry office in search of the ideal but undiscoverable cook. And in between whiles she would run round the shops to see the coming fashions and arrange for the renovation of her frocks.

Colette talks and talks. But in her clear voluble voice I discern the slightest hesitation and a note which is not strictly true. . . . Yes, little Colette, I understand! Your flat, your frocks, your domestic worries, are all pretexts, convenient pretexts invented to account for your flight to Paris. Alas! Aunt Emily and Gustave, simple souls, did not notice the significant discord, the illuminating play of feature which do not deceive me. Colette is lying, and lying very badly, because she is unexperienced in the art. In her simple life she has never told anything graver than a slight fib. Now it is something more serious. . . .

What is she reading in my eyes? She

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## LOVE AND COLETTE

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comes near me and in her kittenish, coaxing way puts her hands in my lap.

“Madeleine, you look incredulous. . . .”

“That is just what I am, Colette. But, for mercy’s sake, be silent! You would regret your confidence and I should find it inconvenient.”

“But I have done nothing wrong!”

She is sincere; and the childish cry reassures me.

“Nothing wrong? Very well. Then what have you done?”

“I have . . . I have an admirer.”

“Evidently.”

“How did you know?”

“It was written on your face.”

“You are shocked, Madeleine? Oh! I should not have thought you so proper. Because of one poor little admirer, who is quite nice and very shy, and who asks nothing, who is content to hope, you aren’t going to preach me a sermon? Ah! If you had admirers, and even lovers, I should never change towards you. . . .”

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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“Your admirer is the little artist who furnished your boudoir in the German style. You have left Quercy, your mother-in-law and your husband to come to Paris to meet him.”

“I see that you guess everything, almost everything. But you don't know Frederick. He is called Frederick with a *k*. He knows you, dear. He met you at Georges Petit's with Monsieur Jean Gilbert. And he thought you charming, well dressed, and quite young. . . .”

“Stop, you little serpent! Your flattery does not move me. I don't mind what your Frederick with a *k* says.”

“He is so entertaining. He has such extraordinary ideas about everything. . . .”

“In short, he loves you.”

“Madly.”

“And you love him.”

She bends her head and, in the fleeting hieroglyphics of the flame, seems to seek a reply which is difficult to express.

“I like him very much.”

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## LOVE AND COLETTE

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I am convinced. It is a mere flirtation. The woman who made that involuntary avowal, the only one that counts, is not in love. Love is a bird which soars high and will never nest in this child's heart. Colette, I believe, is incapable of a sentiment, which is one of the most profound and which re-creates a being from the very foundations. Yet a mere imitation of love, a pseudo passion, may spoil a woman's life.

Fortunately a flirtation, before any irreparable imprudence has been committed, is merely a slight disease of the imagination which is easily cured. The idea of this flirtation suggests to Colette's mind a series of pleasant pictures, which are as yet perfectly innocent—meetings in public gardens, talks in tea-shops, secret correspondence, extravagant compliments, which, being so much incense burnt in the Idol's nostrils, never appear to that Idol anything but extremely delicate—in a word, a delightful variation in the monotony of conjugal life.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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All young wives, after five or six years with a faithful and unimaginative husband, desire some such experience. They never mean anything wrong, to use Colette's words. All they want is a little amusement. And if his wife is bored it is almost always the husband's fault. . . . Gustave has great virtues but no great faults. One can't passionately love a man who has no great faults. One has no hold upon him. One knows him once for all. No woman will contradict me.

So Colette is not really in love with this good Gustave, neither is she with the little artist. I am even certain that she prefers her husband. So I must side with morality and try to dissipate the danger which is threatening Gustave. Perhaps it may suffice to represent to Colette some of the serious consequences of her flirtation.

She has told me at length all the incidents leading to her love affair, and I am pleased to see that she talks more of herself than of Him.



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## LOVE AND COLETTE

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Then I remark suddenly :

“You love this gentleman. He adores you. Then everything is well. It only remains for you to bring this pretty story to a conclusion by telling Gustave that you want a divorce.”

“Tell Gustave !”

“Yes, my dear child, for you could not possibly be false to that excellent man, while all the time remaining his wife and spending his money. Heaven, no doubt foreseeing the painter’s advent, has not blessed your union. The divorce, which you may easily procure, will break your bonds. It will also break Gustave’s heart ; but that does not matter.”

“What !” cried Colette, horrified. “That doesn’t matter !”

“Very little. You must have noticed how common divorce is. You would appear quite absurd if down to old age you kept the same husband. Your faithfulness would seem mere obstinacy or affectation or a slight, cast upon a well-established

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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custom. You must procure your divorce, Colette, while you are young, when there is yet time for you to remarry, to divorce again, and to marry for the third time. As for Gustave, he is as faithful as a poodle, he will never replace you. Lonely and sad, he will grow old, surrounded by all the things which will recall you to him and by your portraits, the sight of which will make him weep. Aunt Emily will be dead, poor woman! Gustave will have no one to comfort and look after him. And his greatest grief will be his ignorance of the cause which made you leave one who was so loyally and absolutely devoted to you. 'It must have been my fault,' he will think. 'That dear little Colette, whom I loved so tenderly, can't be wholly in the wrong. She has punished me for some fault I have unwittingly committed. I can't dislike her.' And meanwhile . . ."

I embroider on this theme. I paint the picture darker still. And then what do I see? A tear coursing down Colette's cheek,

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## LOVE AND COLETTE

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then another, and my little cousin begins to sob. . . .

“I am not so unkind as you think. I never thought of all that. A divorce! Why, I have too much regard for Gustave to leave him!”

“But the other?”

“I don’t know.”

“If you had to give up one of them?”

“I should certainly not give up Gustave, for he is my husband. I am very fond of him, although I can’t say I am in love with him. I have grown accustomed to him. And I don’t want to break his heart. . . .”

“But you must choose, little Colette.”

She is crying, and her tears show that her choice is made. She is weeping over a lost plaything, a pretty illusion, the love she had inspired, the love she had thought she felt. But now she is compelled to be sincere with herself. To love is to prefer. Now she knows that she prefers Gustave, who represents wisdom, reason, security, and unromantic affection. She has not

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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exactly fallen in her own esteem, but she has grown more commonplace.

“Keep me with you, Madeleine,” she entreats, “that will be best. If I go back alone to Paris I shall do something foolish. . . . And I might regret it.”

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## A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY

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### CHAPTER XXXV

#### A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY

“**C**OME into the garden, Colette. . . We will gather flowers for the luncheon-table. The children have gone down into the hollow for branches of spindle wood and hawthorn. I want my house to be very beautiful to-day.”

“Because Jean Gilbert is coming.”

“Why are you laughing, you impudent woman! You must know that this morning I expect the Destricourts, the Mérignans, Monsieur Delannoy . . .”

“And Monsieur Jean Gilbert.”

“Well, why not?”

“Why not, indeed, my dear Madeleine! But you must let me tease you. It is my revenge. You scolded me the other day. And through you I gave up my poor little flirtation, my nice admirer. . . .”

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Then she sighs.

“I was too fond of him to be gay now he has gone, yet not fond enough to suffer on his account. If ever I commit the supreme folly it will be for some one else. . . .”

“There’s a fine conclusion to all my wise words.”

She takes me by the arm and leads me away. Poor Colette! I can see that she is not gay. I am sure she means well, but unless Gustave is careful he will spoil my work.

Now we are both on the garden terrace. It’s so mild that we have kept on our morning gowns and slippers.

The sun’s feeble rays caress our bare heads. The garden, so long bathed in darkness, shakes off its slumber and lets the blue shadows creep down the stems of the plants, down the back of the leaves, under the shade of the walls which are covered with fruit trees. And everything that is not blue and wet seems the colour

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## A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY

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of dawn and of dew. This September garden, wherein only yesterday I heard the first sound of Autumn's footsteps, is innocent, bright, and gay like a drop of water in the sunlight.

Beyond the limes, the winding road and the valley are shrouded in a grey and silver mist, through which the hills loom vaguely as if drawn in pastel on some light grey gauze. Everything appears curiously remote and detached, and to everything the morning mist imparts the beautiful bloom of ripe ungathered fruit. Nature becomes virginal once more.

Along the garden walk, on each side, runs a row of espalier pear trees like a double garland on a frieze. Other pear trees, growing freely, shade the kitchen garden, where I perceive the bluish-green of the cabbage and the filigree work of the onion balls. Flowers fraternise with vegetables, their humble peasant cousins! . . . Majestic autumn flowers, tall purple or golden dahlias, asters, zinnias, mottled

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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coreopsis, green daisies, which, though pink or white, still in their silky softness tend to a violet hue. At this early hour they have not yet assumed those gorgeous tones which at evening repeat the colours of the setting sun. There is still a vague mistiness in the air which softens the vividness of colour.

“Don’t gather those flowers,” said Colette. “They have no scent. They are like rich people dressed in gleaming velvet and satin, but who say nothing because they think nothing. Perhaps we may find a few roses.”

“We shall, Colette, and we won’t disdain humble flowers, larkspurs, scabias and tiny pansies with anxious faces, which, growing smaller and smaller, will continue to flower until the end of November.”

“At the end of November surely all the flowers have gone.”

“Not all. Gardens are never without flowers. One can see, Colette, that you are a town-dweller. You only know the



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## A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY

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flowers in shops and those which bloom in the holidays!

“I was just as ignorant as you once. Then it occurred to me to pass a whole year in the country, and I was greatly surprised.

“In November, when the garden robed itself in gold and then in red copper, I bid farewell to my rose trees. The rarest, the most delicate disappeared beneath straw coverlets. Geranium cuttings were placed under glass. The hops one by one shed their leaves, and every morning the frost killed some tardy flower. Only dahlias and chrysanthemums persisted.

“Then they faded in their turn, and I imagined that in December my garden would look as desolate as a deserted cemetery.

“But after all the big, brilliant flowers had perished I discovered survivors. Yes, in places sheltered from the wind, but exposed to the sun, I found that stunted pansies, minute scabias, pale roses, and

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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here and there mignonette persisted in living.

“ Brave little flowers! They were not so large nor so highly coloured as their elder sisters; they had scarcely any scent, yet they appeared to me more adorable than all the others. They lasted till Christmas, then the Christmas roses opened their white wax-like corollas slightly tinted with pink or green. Finally, on the edge of the wood I discovered the first snow-drop, herald of spring.

“ And I understood that nature’s death in winter is an invention of poets. Nature’s life never ceases, it relaxes merely. And though benumbed, even frozen, it can always bring forth a flower.”

Into my cousin’s pretty face there stole a look which was at once amused and affectionate.

“ And you, wise Madeleine, who in all things seek some symbolical and spiritual meaning, do you not understand the lesson taught by these persistent flowers? At

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## A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN DAY

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all ages and at all seasons one may gather love and happiness, and never is the garden of life utterly barren. The time when the gay rose trees die is not yet for you, Madeleine; in your heart bloom other flowers than the sad chrysanthemums; and many a year will pass e'er you will be reduced to deck your white hair with those Christmas roses which are said to be a cure for madness.

"You are like the September garden, burdened with fruits and radiant with flowers. It is only a curious pride mingled perhaps with coquetry which makes you pretend to be weary, disappointed, and resigned. . . .

"Madeleine, look within and you will find corners of your heart so warm and sheltered that flowers may bloom there until you are old. You will love, you will be loved. . . .

"But why should I speak of the future? Must I tell you what all your friends have guessed? You have diverted me from my

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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little love affair. I will take a generous revenge by urging you to tread the primrose path of love on which you hesitate to enter."

Thus spoke Colette. But I did not answer. I was looking into the distance at some one who was coming up the road.

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## HESITATION

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### CHAPTER XXXVI

#### HESITATION

I LEFT my carriage at the entrance to the wood, and in autumnal silence, amid russet shadows and the golden light of the forest glade, I walk alone.

Overhead, the verdure, which once formed one continuous Gothic nave, has parted to reveal the soft blue sky with a border of green branches. Of richer hue than old Spanish curtains, worn, tattered and gorgeous, in parallel lines, they tower up into the dim blue distance, which my glance fails to fathom. The hem of my chestnut frock, the tip of my brown fur stole touch the carpet of fallen leaves, which here are brown and dry, there still green but mottled with yellow decay. They cover the fermenting earth and the spongy moss which gives beneath my footstep.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Not a single bird's note! Barely the tiny sound of a branch breaking under a squirrel as it leaps. No flowers, but hundreds of toadstools, malevolent little gnomes in leather caps, sheets of white parchment and protecting scarlet parasols. In the underwood, agaric and amanite flourish. I gather one or two chilled sprays of broom, a few æthereal hair-bells, and every movement seems to set free the bitter-sweet scent so characteristic of an October wood.

I wear your livery, forest of fawn and brown, forest of pheasant and squirrel, forest in which lingers perpetual sunset, aglow with the beech's flaming heatless fire. Dear solitude! Welcome a woman with saddened heart, who is like you and shudders with you at the approach of decline. To you, friend, I will confide what I have avowed to no one:

Colette's words have troubled me. On the terrace the other morning, as with dim eyes and expectant soul I looked down

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## HESITATION

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the road, I could not answer when she counselled me to love.

But, when he, for whom I was looking, appeared, why did I hurry into the house? Why all day did I avoid being left alone with him? What defensive instinct made me affect that unusual coldness which gave him pain?

Our friends contrived that we should be together, and sometimes they discreetly withdrew. Then a wave of tenderness would pass over Gilbert's face. And with a glance, tender and soft as a caress, he looked at me out of those green brown eyes, which seem to have retained the reflection of many a lovely landscape, which have always refused to see anything but the beauty of things, and have ever remained ignorant of all that is vile, ugly, and perverse.

Yet in his glance I could also read anxious, diffident entreaty and affection, but more than affection.

Still I remained cold and apparently

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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unmoved. . . . In the evening poor Gilbert went away very unhappy. He sent me a letter full of reproaches. He wrote of nothing but friendship, and yet it was a letter of love. And I too am unhappy.

I have kept the passion of love out of my life. Between me and the enemy I have raised all manner of barriers : my children, my memories, my taste for independence, above all my pride—that proud humility, the supreme modesty of a woman who dreads her inability to retain a man's love and in anticipation rejects his pity. . . . Too often had I seen faded women hanging on to the lovers who threatened to desert them ; and too often had I caught men jeering at the persistence of women who, despite their wrinkles, are determined to be loved and desired.

Poor women ! grey haired and with eyes that have lost their brightness, moths fluttering round the deadly flame, how I pitied you ! And I made excuses for your



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## HESITATION

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folly. But you taught me a wholesome lesson, which I never forgot.

Ah! if ever my son and daughter were to accept a new occupant of our home, one who might be to them at once a father and a friend, I should still feel nervous and anxious.

Not that my heart is worn out. . . . The springs of life and love seethe within me as wildly as in the morning of my youth. Though sealed and hidden now, some day they might gush forth; and their enforced concealment gives me pain. How I long to love! How I could love!

Why am I afraid?

Because I am too serious. Because I foresee the new life, the new duties, the new responsibilities, and the risk of suffering which my consent may involve. . . . When a young girl consents to return a man's love, she has only herself to consider. I have my children. I should bring as my dowry the momentous present, the long past, and a heart more apt to suffer now than once it was.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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Happy, perhaps, are the women who can laugh at love, who can gather it like some fragile flower, like those clocks in the meadows upon which the wind blows and they are gone. Happy those whose only loves are their clothes, their pleasures, or their own form reflected in the glass. Loving themselves, they grow old, but self love persuades them that they are still young and beautiful. Their only passion is phantasy, their only pride vanity.

I am not one of them. For me the passion of love is something more than a kiss, however sweet that kiss may be. I have never imagined love limited by time, but have always sought to prolong it to infinitude and eternity.

I must confess that I have failed. Childhood's loves, the pure dream of betrothal, nuptial joy, swiftly cooling into every day affection, a sad love unfulfilled, which was my first true passion, a temptation strong yet resisted, you never, any of you, filled my yearning heart.

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## HESITATION

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I dream and once again other autumns come before me, when, as to-day, I wore a brown frock and a toque with russet wings. I see a garden on a river bank, and through the evening darkness, glimmering with fading lights, I seem to hear, growing fainter and fainter in the distance, the music of a brass band. I stand at the foot of a flight of stone steps, with my foot upon the lowest, and laugh as I watch a young man tie my shoe-lace.

I recall . . . I must recall the bitterness of past tears and the soreness of a bleeding heart. For it will give me courage now to renounce the last love of my life.

Remember, Madeleine, the grace and the gaiety of that early friendship, the brilliant repartee, the apt words which seek and find the most sensitive spots of the heart. Remember the dawn of passion, when respect was in itself an avowal, letters, meetings, thousands of pretexts invented to intensify an intimacy which as yet was innocent. And remember how dearly you

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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had to pay for those moments which together did not compose many hours. You broke the bond which yourself had formed. You uttered the word "farewell." And you wept when you were obeyed.

Now that you are no longer young or brilliant, or so secure as you once were against the shafts of love, but as vulnerable as the ripe fruits which tempt the wasps and the bird, will you now re-enter the charmed circle?

Thus I question myself and dare not listen to the answer which my heart gives in spite of itself. I appeal to nature, which is counselling renunciation.

"Look," says the forest, "how beautiful I am, and even more impressive than in summer. Sun, rain, and wind have given me the tints you love, funeral gold and purple. But I have ceased to dream of spring. Leaf by leaf I let my splendour fall. And I accept approaching winter."

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## MY CHILDREN

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### CHAPTER XXXVII

#### MY CHILDREN

**N**OW my one desire was to go home. Around me the autumnal fires were dying down into violet vapour and the trees in the glade were growing as dark and rigid as iron. The sky had reddened with that deep red which heralds the north wind. All nature was contracting, hardening, and announcing a cold, crisp night, brilliant with stars and frost.

As the evening drew on, the forest became unsympathetic. A curious feeling of abandonment made me shudder. In this death-like twilight, among woods from which the soul was departing, I seemed to be the only living thing, like some woodman's fire burning solitary in the clearing.

Then I saw in imagination my house on

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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the plateau's edge, my house man built and vaguely human, venerable as a grandmother and warm with all the lives it has nursed in its bosom, my house, full of cherished objects, furniture, books, fire, lamplight, and the dear ones whom I love.

My step quickened. I felt the dampness of the moss in my limbs and the wet heavy hem of my skirt clung round my ankles.

At length I reached the end of the interminable wood. There I found my little carriage with its impatient horse and the country coachman, who thought me lost in the forest. And quickly we started homeward.

My fireside, my children! To them alone I give my love! From them alone I shall receive the counsel which will reveal life's hidden meaning.

I long to take my son and daughter in my arms. What are they doing at this moment? Perhaps listening for the carriage wheels and growing anxious at my absence. . . . I shall see them from afar, running to meet

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## MY CHILDREN

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me. My daughter will gaily chide. My son will forget to reproach me for the anxiety I have caused him. Only his eyes, his beautiful eyes, will speak; and I shall be confused by the child's look, in which the man's grave and tender glance is already discernible.

Annette! Jean! For many years love has had but two names for me, or rather a double one: Yours! Why should it have any other? Why should I tardily discover an empty place between you? Come close to me, let me feel my home full and my heart overflowing.

You must unconsciously help me. For unaided the arms that hold you would tremble. Unaided I could not forbear to turn my head to look once more and see if someone were not coming up the road.

My carriage stops at the gate, and the gardener comes swinging his lantern to light me into the house. . . . The fire is burning, the lamp is lit. An old lady, my friend

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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and neighbour, is sitting in the chimney-corner. . . . I ask :

“ Where are the children ? ”

“ Oh ! ” she said, “ don't be anxious. Annette is at Mother George's : you know, the woman who takes in pauper children. She is helping her to put the children to bed.”

“ And Jean ? ”

“ He is flirting with little Simone, with whom he has been playing tennis. I expect he is taking her home by the longest way, . . . but in all innocence ! ”

I sit down without removing my hat, and the good old lady sees that I am disappointed.

“ What, Madeleine, you can't be jealous ? This is what you must expect, my dear. . . . Babies are your rivals in Annette's heart and pretty girls in Jean's.”

She is right, and I myself had already laughingly perceived that same rivalry. I myself had noticed the awakening of the maternal instinct in my daughter, of love in my son ; and it had not displeased me.



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## MY CHILDREN

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My little Annette always adored dolls as I never did. At three years old, when she herself was but a living doll, she knew by instinct how to hold and rock those inert figures with an ease which promised a mother's grace and dignity. At five she would lay hands on every scrap of stuff, out of which to cut frocks no bigger than my hand; and I remember a wonderful Scotch cap which she fashioned out of red flannel and trimmed with a feather picked out of a bolster. Sometimes, almost pale with emotion, she used to say to me:

“ I love my dolly so much that I seem to feel her quite warm.”

That was the voice of instinct, but of something more than instinct—a deeper sentiment, for she did more than fondle her dolls, she displayed a tender solicitude and a precocious aptness for all duties connected with the upbringing of children, a feeling for the side of maternity which is least animal, least merely “ female.”

Later she grew to worship children of

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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flesh, the tiniest, the poorest, the ugliest, and the dirtiest babies that beggars carry about in order to inspire pity, or squalling infants in country crèches. She never felt the loathing with which they inspired me. Her behaviour towards them revealed untold treasures of tenderness and patience.

Study, a young mind's amazement at the marvels of science and art, all the intellectual curiosity of the girls of her generation, harmonised mysteriously with the normal development of instinct. Dear, brave little heart, sincere and frank, you accept your woman's destiny with all its inevitable joys and sorrows. Your maiden dreams must include love, but they go beyond, to the child of your imagination which you already bear in your heart.

Some day that child will take you from me. It has taken you already in anticipation. I am the beloved past. He is the future.

I confess that such hopes, the fulfilment of which is as yet remote, leave me cold, and the condition of grandmother does not

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## MY CHILDREN

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appeal to me as an occasion for infinite felicity. I myself became a mother too young and without desiring it. In my maternal love there was more sentiment than instinct, and I have been so pleased to see my children grow up that I do not long for other infants. They always seem to me the mere sketches, the mere grubs of humanity.

What child of my future race shall I ever love as I love my son? The affection of a young mother for a boy on the verge of manhood is one of the deepest and strongest of sentiments and one of the most mysterious.

This delicious feeling is closely akin to love. It has its secret root in a woman's amazement and pride at having created a being so different from herself, who is a life which is not a prolongation but rather a transposition of her own. In our daughters we recognise our own childhood and youth just as after many years we may re-read some beautiful book which we had almost forgotten. Our sons are a new volume,

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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difficult to decipher, unexpected; disconcerting and pathetic.

We, in our simplicity, believe them to be what we ourselves should have been had nature given us a different sex. And into this belief there enters doubtless an element of truth, since frequently in appearance and in temperament sons resemble the mother.

And for a son, his mother is the first, the pure, and the divine incarnation of femininity. The boy's affection is more passionate than the girl's, more protective, more jealous.

The son wants his mother to be pretty, but he does not like men to look at her too closely, and even when he is quite young he declares himself the enemy of indelicate admirers. I have seen some little gentlemen of five pull their mother's hand or skirt when she seems too indulgent to some stranger. They are furious, and the wrath of these little men seems to say: "This woman is mine alone."

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## MY CHILDREN

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I was yours alone, my child, but you also were mine alone. My eyes contained your heaven; my arms and my heart bounded your horizon. I was she who knows everything and can do everything; your only refuge from sorrow, your only light in all the difficulties and doubts of childhood.

Now you know that other eyes are sweet, you vaguely divine that other arms may embrace you. You still tell me that I am the most beautiful of all, but these are only terms of endearment. . . .

Yet, after all, I am not jealous! Grow, be loved, be happy. . . . The women whom you will adore will discern in you that suggestion of refined tenderness, that exquisite delicacy of heart which a man whom men have brought up never possesses.

Thus, my children, a day will come when you will go forth to love and to new homes. Heaven forbid that I should darken your path with my grief!

I will remain alone, and you will think me meet for solitude, because my hair is grey.

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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### CHAPTER XXXVIII

ON AN AIR BY SCHUMANN

**I**T will remain for ever engraved upon my memory, that little street at Auteuil, those two long walls overgrown with hairy clematis and ivy, fringed at the foot with a brown border of dry leaves. Over the wall tops, the trees in the closed gardens mingle their faded gold with the pale silver of an autumn sky.

The house at the end of the street looks like a gamekeeper's lodge. With its slate roof and Louis XVI façade restored under Louis Philippe, it might well have been the good Chardin's dwelling or Father Corot's.

It is Gilbert's house, and it seems made for him, for us. Is it an omen? It has a family likeness to my own little house at Rouvrenoir.

From afar it seems to watch me coming

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## ON AN AIR BY SCHUMANN

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as if I were some stranger unexpected by the master of the dwelling. O little house, which will be mine one day, can it be that you have long forgotten the sound of a woman's footstep on your threshold or of a woman's voice beneath your roof?

Greeting to you, worn doorstep, railings rusty under downy clematis, strong gate forbidding like some guardian servant, primitive bell which is moved by an iron wire and which shall announce to Gilbert his friend's first unexpected visit! Greeting to you, dear old-fashioned things, which will learn to know and serve me! . . .

But, O Heavens! what have I done? . . . Some one is coming! . . . And now I want to take flight! Some one is coming! . . . How my heart beats! Gilbert will hear it and I cannot breathe! My collar seems to throttle me . . . I must be pale. . . . And the fear haunts me that my hat is on one side, that my hair is untidy, that Gilbert will think me ugly. . . . Ah, there, the door opens!

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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How disappointing! Gilbert is out! The white-capped Breton woman says he felt too unsettled to work and so he has gone to see our friend La Perche's new miniatures in the Rue Vineux. Alas! Those pretty painted women will keep him late. . . . Must I go! . . . No! . . . My desire for flight has left me, and my needless dread is transformed into audacity. . . . I will wait for Gilbert, in his home, among his furniture and his pictures, and thus savour a foretaste of my life in this house.

The Breton servant shows me into the drawing-room leading to the studio, and there confidingly she leaves me alone. . . . The room is small, and the shadows cast by the garden greenery give it a melancholy, mysterious air. On the walls, hung with green moiré, are a few pastels in frames and pictures of fruits, flowers, and landscapes. . . . There are volumes in a dwarf book-case and an album of music on the piano.

I examine the flower portraits, white



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## ON AN AIR BY SCHUMANN

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roses in a blue pot, little yellow sunflowers, passion-flowers with violet hearts, the "flowers of Saint Gudula" so dear to Gérard de Nerval. And I am glad that my friend is a poet, that it is his to express the hidden meaning, the mysterious soul of the humblest things, all spring in a jonquil, all autumn in a green apple, streaked with red and pink.

I am pleased that in his library are the books I should have chosen, those which delighted my twentieth year, poems of fancy and feeling, romances of the inner life.

And on the piano it pleases me to see a collection of Schumann, pieces which I play . . . not well . . . for myself alone.

I stand and turn over the album's pages with my ungloved hand. . . . *Novelette*, Manfred, the Carnival Waltz, the Reverie from "*Kinder Scenen*." Suddenly a strange scruple possesses me. I have loved this music too well, I have associated it, all unweening, with the emotions of a past love, and now I dread the remembrances

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## MADELEINE AT HER MIRROR

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it evokes. Indeed, in Gilbert's own house, at this momentous hour, I dare not awake the echoes of a memory so long silent in my soul.

I sit down to the piano and let my hands wander airily over the keys. . . . Only one arpeggio lightly played with fingers barely touching the notes! Yet my scruple returns. I close the book and let my hands fall into my lap. Then, with head leaning against the high back of the chair, in a low voice I call Gilbert, the unkind Gilbert who is neglecting me. . . .

And I talk to him. "See," I say, "how I hesitate to rob you of a single thought. I should feel as if I were wronging you if for one second I let love assume a form which is not yours. Love is you, Gilbert. I come to you desiring gravely and tenderly to give you all my life; and my youth, as it lives in my memory, must be yours. Alas! all my youth was spent in waiting for you. Through love and through sorrow, every day brought me nearer to you.

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## ON AN AIR BY SCHUMANN

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“My friend, you who have slowly won me, must keep me and protect me, for the wisest woman needs protection against the tricks of memory which sometimes turn her head. I, in my joyless marriage, was faithful but too fond of recalling a look, a smile, a word. I want to be faithful to you even in the involuntary efforts of my imagination, faithful with all my heart.”

Thus I confess my love and my weakness to one who should be present. And, having unburdened my heart, I yield to the influence of my surroundings, to the strange atmosphere of this little sea-green room. So perfect is the silence that I can almost hear the shedding of a sunbeam on to the carpet. Day is declining. . . . What great grave happiness does twilight bring ?

All around me colours are fading, everything is growing grey ; within, it is as if there were a mist, with love shining as in a divine shadow.

My fingers have touched the piano. Almost without my knowing it, a few isolated